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VisasQ shares expert knowledge across the globe

Unraveling Japanese companies

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Knowledge-sharing businesses give people new potential to utilize their expertise and work flexibly across different sectors and life stages.

Front-runner VisasQ Inc. operates a matchmaking platform for experts in various fields and companies requiring their advice. Founded in 2012, the startup has posted robust growth, making its debut in the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Mothers market for startups in 2020 and buying out U.S.-based Coleman in 2021. Today, its knowledge-sharing database involves more than 700,000 experts in 190 countries, including 200,000 in Japan.

"There are so many ways you can succeed if there are no employment barriers of age or life stage," CEO and co-founder Eiko Hashiba said in a recent interview, part of a monthly series conducted by Naonori Kimura, a partner for the consulting firm Industrial Growth Platform Inc. "By changing the way we work, we can achieve well-being in society — this is what I've believed in since the company's founding."

VisasQ provides "spot consulting" services in a variety of fields — information technology, marketing, retailing, wholesale, medical and insurance services — for individual as well as corporate customers. Experts have the opportunity to work hourly as a part-time or secondary job. Customers have access to expertise at costs lower than traditional long-term consulting contracts.

VisasQ's growth reflects Japanese companies' need to update themselves in our rapidly transforming society. "The speed at which Japanese firms are required to change themselves is accelerating, and they face more and more challenges to starting new business" as well as launching new projects and streamlining their business portfolios, the former Goldman Sachs banker said. "Because of the higher speed, they struggle to do it alone. That is the background of our corporate growth."

In the future, VisasQ sees recruiting full-time experts as a business opportunity. "In modern society, barriers for employment styles are coming down. People working as freelancers often start to work as full-time employees, while full-timers may take second jobs if they get the chance," Hashiba said. "The time has come when people change their work styles in various ways."

Hashiba thinks there is more potential



Eiko Hashiba, the CEO of VisasQ Inc. COSUPI

for the market, which should benefit her company in particular because it dominated the market earlier than others in Japan.

In its medium-term business plan released last year, the company aims at ¥30 billion (\$200 million) in sales in the business year to February 2030. For the business year that ended in February, it logged a group operating profit of ¥1.23 billion on sales of ¥14.3 billion, compared to a ¥59 million operating loss on sales of ¥13.1 billion in the previous year.

The idea for starting the business was born from Hashiba's own experience — crucially, her boss's comment that she could not get a raise because she lacked leadership. Feeling rejected, she determined to take on a new challenge: becoming an entrepreneur. "I believed in my leadership, so that comment made me

think I should try a different challenge," Hashiba said. "Then I started to think about lots of business ideas."

She became inspired by a book about collaborative consumption, in which people provide services through the internet — for instance, Uber and Airbnb. "That was when I realized that how we work should change," Hashiba said.

As a single mother, she understands the struggle to manage children and a career at the same time. Also, the MBA holder from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was working at the private equity fund Unizon Capital, where she saw how a company needs knowledge and expertise when it needs to evolve.

What is more, at this time her father retired from a local bank at the age of 60, like many Japanese under the current system, and his expertise was lost to others.

That was when she started to think about gathering such expertise in a new business. "It is very sad when what you have accumulated at a workplace over a long time is suddenly abandoned," Hashiba said.

When Hashiba and her co-founder launched the company, there were no such services in Japan. By acting first, they dominated the market. She often took part in business events in order to meet various business experts and made phone calls to hunt for them.

VisasQ's core business includes market and industry research for consulting firms and financial institutions by collecting data from interviews in industry and job markets, conducting business-to-business online surveys and offering a text Q&A answer service from at least five experts within 24 hours.

"I hear our customers say their productivity has increased. Not only that, I'm also glad they say they can get good information," Hashiba said.

VisasQ describes its mission as to "make insightful connections possible between global leaders and people with expertise" and its vision as to "build a better future through a global platform that reduces barriers and enables the direct exchange of mission-critical knowledge."

While growing, VisasQ has also kept thinking about what matters to it. Among its recently updated five values, the most symbolic one is "Sharpen our edge," meaning that the company acts fast "on what matters most to be the top choice for clients and experts." Another value, "Collaborate without boundaries," shows that the company is always looking at the potential of overseas markets.

What VisasQ ultimately aims for is the creation of a new industry centered around the sharing of knowledge. "In the end, I hope I can create a knowledge-industry platform that can overcome the barriers of languages," Hashiba said.

NAONORI KIMURA
INDUSTRIAL GROWTH PLATFORM
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who offer their expert insights and the companies that utilize them.

Co-founded by CEO Eiko Hashiba, whose own entrepreneurial story is filled with numerous failures and sincere advice from predecessors in other fields, VisasQ has grown through its core business of "spot consulting" by expanding services and entering the U.S. market through the buyout of Coleman. Its ongoing proactive efforts to create new value are a testament to each employee's ongoing reflection and the organization's updating of its way of being, symbolized by this year's renewal of its values.

Despite the rapid development of new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence, the value of interfaces for human experiences and insights remains high. It is no exaggeration to say that hidden truths can be found in these human voices.

In such an era, VisasQ's mission, to "make insightful connections possible between global leaders and people with expertise," will undoubtedly become even more important. Especially in Japan, future growth hinges on how individuals can transform. We hope that VisasQ's efforts and evolution will become a driving force for change in this country.



Naonori Kimura interviews Hashiba at VisasQ's office in the Aobadai area of Tokyo's Meguro Ward. COSUPI

Osaka Expo Times Gallery



Princess Takamado pays a visit to the Bulgarian Pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka on June 28 along with Bulgarian Ambassador Marieta Arabadjieva. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA



Qatari cultural events shine at the Qatar State Pavilion during Expo Osaka 2025. EMBASSY OF THE STATE OF QATAR



Ambassador Adel Alsunaini and Takagi Kei, Member of Parliament Secretary General of the Yemeni-Japanese Parliamentary Friendship Association, at the National Day of the Republic of Yemen. EMBASSY OF YEMEN



A yoga session at India's pavilion in Osaka. EMBASSY OF INDIA

Peace in the Dark program offers reflective journey in Hiroshima

ESG/SDGs

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Marking the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing, Hiroshima hosted a powerful experiential program called Peace in the Dark where participants could quietly reflect on the meaning of peace.

Held from Aug. 2 to 11 at the former Bank of Japan building in Naka Ward, with an opening ceremony on Aug. 1, the event was co-organized by the City of Hiroshima and the Dialogue Japan Society. All sessions were fully booked before launch. Guided by visually impaired attendants through complete darkness, participants engaged in dialogue — and emerged with their own personal reflections on what peace truly means.

The opening ceremony featured speeches by Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui, Shimizu Corp. senior adviser Yoichi Miyamoto and others. Shinsuke Shimura, the creator of the Dialogue Japan Society, referenced the "miracle of the Bank of Japan" — when, just two days after the atomic bombing, it let commercial banks use the building and citizens gathered there to make withdrawals, in many cases lacking documentation and relying on trust. Remarkably, the amounts they reported were found to be almost entirely accurate. "Turning this place into darkness and engaging in dialogue about peace carries deep meaning," Shimura emphasized. "This may be a small project, but it is by no means powerless."

Matsui, who previously experienced the Dialogue in the Dark program in Tokyo, reflected: "It freed me from my fixed

assumptions. Dialogue without relying on sight deepened my understanding and empathy toward others." He expressed hope that more people would have the opportunity to experience it, calling it a valuable initiative that fosters a culture of peace through dialogue and mutual respect.

Yoichi Miyamoto, a senior adviser at Shimizu Corp., reflected on the company's involvement in constructing and later restoring the historic venue and noted, "Through dialogue, we cultivate the ability to embrace diversity and stand on equal ground." He stressed the importance of such experiences in fostering mutual understanding and empathy in a world increasingly marked by division.

Kiyoe Shimura, representative director of the Dialogue Japan Society, introduced the program as "the world's first Dialogue in the Dark centered on the theme of peace." She noted that "the opposite of war is not simply peace, but the effort to continue a fair dialogue" and expressed her commitment to sustaining peace-building initiatives into the future.

Miki Kawabata, an attendee originally from Hiroshima, recalled what survivors had told her when she was a child: "One told me, 'Peace means forgiving each other.' Another said, 'Peace is passing on stories to children and thinking together.' Their words made me reflect on what peace truly means to me." She expressed her hope that those gathered would also take time to reflect on peace together.

In the program, participants formed small groups and stepped into total darkness. Given white canes, they navigated without vision, relying solely on voices and physical cues. While initial confusion and unease were common, conversation gradually emerged and a quiet sense of connection began to grow. It was precisely through the absence of sight that participants noticed things they might otherwise have overlooked.

Within the darkness, a symbolic journey transported them to the summer of 1945 — the day before the atomic bomb was dropped. Through sound and imagination, they encountered the lives and thoughts of people from that time. This was not a space for seeking the "right answer," but for sharing questions without visual cues. As participants listened closely and turned inward,



The opening ceremony DID

emotions rarely touched in daily life quietly surfaced.

Toward the end of the program, participants returned to 2025 and were given time to reflect and engage in conversation with those they had journeyed into the darkness with. As they listened to each other's words, they were gently invited to contemplate what peace meant to them.

Even without clear answers, carrying that question home lies at the heart of this experience. The words exchanged at the event continue to linger quietly in the mind, subtly transforming the way one sees the world outside.

Many shared reflections such as "Getting to know someone is the first step toward liking them" and "If we learn to acknowledge and support one another, a peaceful future will surely follow." One participant said: "Because I couldn't see, I was able to focus entirely on the other person's heart. It's been a long time since I've connected with someone so deeply."

Some were encouraged by a simple word from another, while others found comfort in shared moments of silence. The question of what peace means to them, gently kindled in the dark, became a small light within each participant — illuminating the first steps toward a more peaceful future, each in their own way.

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