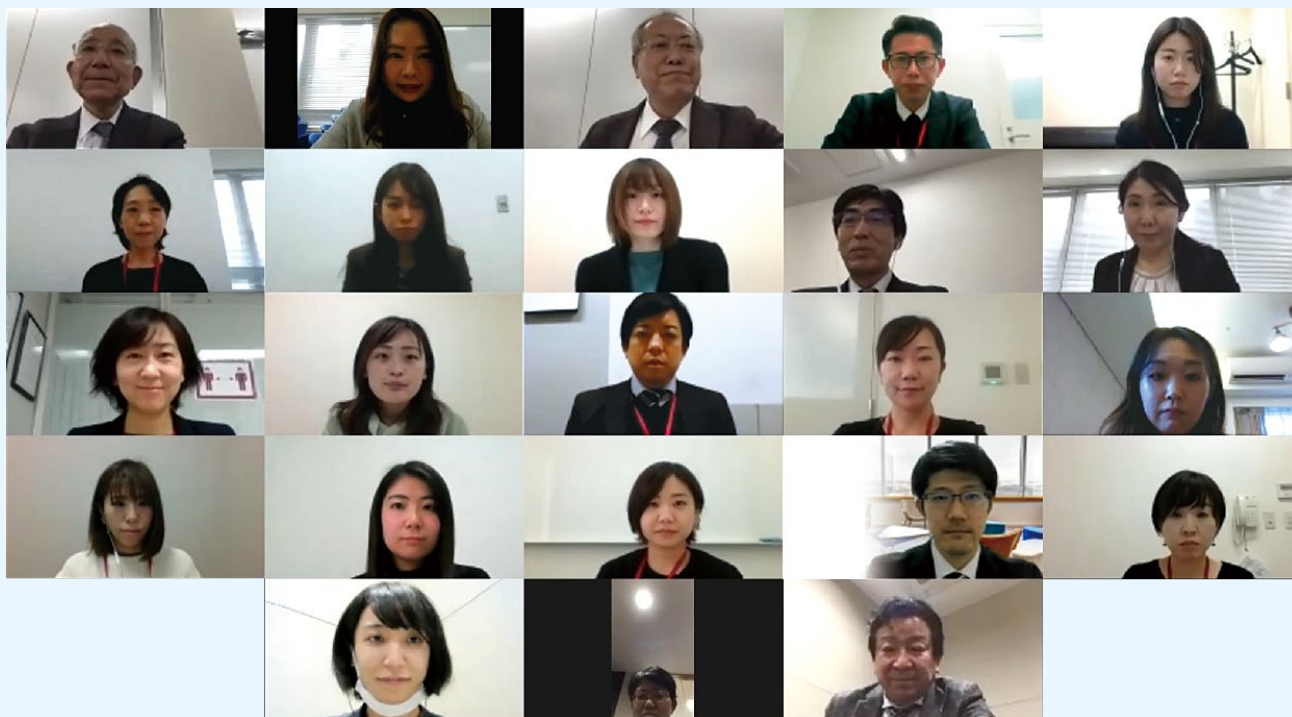


**Special Feature** Dialogue Between Outside Directors and Employees

## Outside Directors and Members of the Audit & Supervisory Board Conducted Interviews to Highlight the Challenges of Human Resources Utilization at AEON MALL, Supporting Value Creation Management



Recognizing that the pursuit of diversity is an important management issue, we asked our outside directors and outside members of the Audit & Supervisory Board to meet with employees, exchanging opinions and listening to real feedback from employees across a variety of life stages and diverse backgrounds. Since the meeting was held online, we were able to meet with employees not only from the Kanto area, but also from all across Japan. We divided the participants into groups by generation, holding discussions along certain topics and providing an opportunity for directors and employees to understand issues more deeply. We asked our outside directors to inquire particularly about the utilization of human capital at AEON MALL. We hope to continue opportunities for such dialogues, inviting outside directors to extend beyond their monitoring function and provide advice to management regarding human resources and other issues. The following is an excerpt of the dialogues, covering the current state of human resources at AEON MALL, as well as issues and expectations for the future.

### Participants

Outside Directors

**Masao Kawabata**  
**Kunihiro Koshizuka**  
**Yasuko Yamashita**

Full-Time Audit & Supervisory Board  
Members

**Maki Watanabe**

Outside Audit & Supervisory Board  
Members

**Takao Muramatsu**  
**Emi Torii**

Audit & Supervisory Board Members  
**Masato Nishimatsu**

Including 16 other employees

\* Outside director Masao Kawabata retired as of May 20, 2021.

## How can employees build a career at AEON MALL while also respecting one's spouse's life and career to achieve a positive work-life balance?

•Topic 1 *How to achieve a positive work-life balance while working at AEON MALL*

•Topic 2 *How to build careers for both oneself and one's spouse*

### Work-Life Balance and Career Development at AEON MALL

Outside directors and AEON MALL employees engaged in a frank discussion about their current concerns, issues, and future expectations in achieving work-life balance and career development at AEON MALL. As these discussions were conducted across multiple sessions and groups of individuals, we summarized the content and opinions for this article.

## Employee Comments and Opinions

### Topic 1 *How to achieve a positive work-life balance while working at AEON MALL*

- I would like to balance childcare and work better, as shift work schedules at the mall mean there are only a few days to spend time with family. It's difficult to balance family time, work time, and personal time.
- I had a hard time finding a new daycare center after being transferred. In particular, employees with preschoolers would probably like to have more time when transferring.
- Even though we have a system for working shorter hours, there's a hurdle in terms of feeling that others in my department will have to pick up the slack. I think the key here is fostering an understanding among co-workers and how supervisors approach the issue.

### Topic 2 *How to build careers for both oneself and one's spouse*

- I want to advance in my career, but I feel that it's difficult to balance child-rearing with the long and busy hours of a manager position. If there were role models of female managers who were also raising children, I think others might be able to see their own hopes for career advancement.
- When an employee follows their spouse on a transfer, perhaps there could be a way to consolidate certain mall-related work that could be performed at home when no mall is nearby.
- In Japan, there is a stereotype that women are solely responsible for housework. We need to change that stereotype. I think the company offers some excellent programs, which we should leverage to make changes.

## Comments From Outside Directors and Outside Members of the Audit & Supervisory Board

**Director A** | Most people think of work-life balance based on work and child-rearing, but I think the ideal is to maintain a balance of base time for work and child-rearing, combined with time spent on hobbies or other enjoyable pursuits. I believe the aim of AEON MALL is to improve so employees can think of a personal *plus-alpha* in their time in addition to work and child-rearing. This dialogue was a valuable opportunity to listen to honest opinions, and I found it very helpful.

**Director B** | We heard some comments from employees worried about the timing of having children. We also heard concerns about the high hurdles to receiving promotions when returning from childcare leave. Others mentioned that having a child might be a hindrance to finding work in certain departments. In the future, we need to have more opportunities to hear from people who have returned to work after taking maternity leave, so we can reflect these experiences in the development of our system.

**Director C** | I am serving as an outside director for AEON MALL while raising a family. When I understood that raising a family while pursuing a career was one reason for my selection, I was very happy to know that something I feared as a career negative was actually regarded as a positive. The understanding and follow-up of the people around you is very important in making children a positive and valuable step. I hope to add my own efforts to spread diversity in the group.