Future Forum

Toward Becoming a Company People Want to Support

— Hodogaya Chemical in 2050 Envisioned By Young Employees —

What kind of company does Hodogaya Chemical aspire to be in 2050?
To explore this question, young employees from a wide range of functions, including sales, R&D, manufacturing, administration, and overseas operations, came together for the Future Forum.
A recurring aspiration throughout the discussions was for Hodogaya Chemical to be "a company people want to support." What does it mean to be a company that earns the support of society, customers, local communities, families, and the colleagues we work alongside? The discussion extended beyond the direction of the business to manufacturing, ways of working, corporate culture, and the Company's relationship with society.
What emerged was a vision of a company that takes on the challenge of solving social issues, values people, and encourages employees to take on new challenges. With a strong belief that what we do today can change the future, young employees are shaping a vision of Hodogaya Chemical for 2050.

Toward a Value-Creating Company That Society Needs

At the heart of the discussion was the conviction that Hodogaya Chemical should continue to contribute to society through its core businesses. Many young employees expressed the view that social contribution should not be something separate from business, but should be embedded in the business itself. Examples included helping maintain and preserve green spaces through agrochemicals, advancing the information and communications society through electronic materials, and supporting decarbonization through environmentally friendly products. Participants shared a recognition that Hodogaya Chemical's technologies themselves help underpin society.

Topics discussed
Corporate model

Participants also agreed on the need to take on new challenges with the next 25 years in mind. Hodogaya Chemical has grown by capturing opportunities in the expanding information and communications field, including OLED materials. Looking ahead, participants said the Company needs to take on new challenges in fields shaped by next-generation megatrends, such as climate change, AI, energy, biotechnology and healthcare, and space.

Topics discussed
Business portfolio

There was also extensive discussion of how best to leverage Hodogaya Chemical's synthesis and purification technologies for low-molecular-weight materials and its strengths in electronic materials. Participants agreed on the importance of uncovering latent customer needs and creating new value while strengthening high-mix, low-volume, high-value-added businesses.

Topics discussed
Contribution and responsibility to society

Some participants noted that there is still considerable room to deepen internal collaboration in creating new products. At the same time, others cited the opportunity to stay involved from research through manufacturing as one of the attractions of working at Hodogaya Chemical. Closer collaboration among sales, R&D, and manufacturing, combined with a direct understanding of customers' challenges, could open up more opportunities to create new products and businesses. Young employees see these organic connections across the organization as a source of future competitiveness.

Toward Sustainable Manufacturing Where People and AI Work Together

Topics discussed
Production technology

Discussions about the future of manufacturing generated many concrete ideas about what a chemical manufacturer should look like in 2050. These ideas reflect major social changes, including a shrinking workforce, decarbonization, and advances in AI and robotics.

The factory envisioned by the young employees is not a place where people are expected to push themselves in hazardous environments. It is a smart factory that uses DX, AI, and robotics to sharply reduce dangerous, dirty, and physically demanding

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Topics discussed
Responsibilities as a manufacturer

work. Machines would handle tasks in hazardous areas and physically demanding work, allowing people to focus on monitoring, analysis, and decision-making. Many participants expressed a desire to create workplaces where diverse people can thrive regardless of age, gender, nationality, or disability.

At the same time, many participants said they want to preserve the rewarding aspects of manufacturing. Even as automation advances, human experience, insight, and a practical feel for operations will remain essential. By using AI as a partner and applying AI and digital technologies to capture and share the knowledge of experienced employees and the know-how developed on the shop floor, that expertise can become a strength across the entire workplace. Participants see this as the kind of operator future manufacturing will require.

The discussion also explored decarbonization and the circular use of energy. Participants envisioned factories that use renewable energy and recycled raw materials while making circular use of heat, electricity, water, and raw materials. They also agreed that environmental initiatives should be viewed not simply as a cost, but as an important factor in strengthening the corporate brand and competitiveness.

Young employees believe that being a manufacturer that balances environmental responsibility with economic viability will be essential to earning society's support in 2050.

Topics discussed
Work-life balance and ways of working

Topics discussed
Research and the Next Generation

Topics discussed
Organizational characteristics and culture

Topics discussed
Management philosophy

Toward an Organization Where Everyone Can Take on Challenges and Support One Another

The Future Forum also devoted considerable time to discussing what kind of organization Hodogaya Chemical should aspire to be.

Participants described positive aspects of Hodogaya Chemical today, saying that people are kind, the atmosphere is calm, and motivated employees are given opportunities. At the same time, they also recognized challenges, including a tendency to see issues as someone else's responsibility, hesitation to act for fear of failure, and an inclination to follow precedent.

That is why many participants said that, looking toward 2050, they want every employee to take ownership of issues and help create a culture in which people feel empowered to take on challenges. This requires a system that fairly recognizes not only those who take on challenges themselves, but also those who support them. Rather than blaming people for failure, the organization should share the lessons learned so they can inform the next attempt, while celebrating achievements together. Young employees believe that a culture in which people can take on challenges with confidence will be essential.

Ways of working also need to offer flexibility that accommodates diverse values. Employees should be able to choose how they work according to their stage of life, balance work with childcare or caregiving, and make flexible use of remote work and flextime. At the same time, participants see a need for more diverse professional career paths that do not depend on becoming a manager, as well as systems that enable teams to support one another when employees temporarily step away from work for life events.

When the Future Forum first reported its conclusions, some executives questioned whether the phrase "a company people want to support" sounded too passive. Yet the discussions revealed that young employees were not simply seeking a company that delivers strong financial performance. They want to build a culture that is unafraid of challenges and grounded in professionalism. They envision a company that takes on the challenge of solving social issues, values people, and enables every employee to work with pride. By continuing to build on these efforts, Hodogaya Chemical can become a company that earns the support of society, customers, local communities, families, and colleagues alike. Young employees have already begun taking on the challenge of shaping Hodogaya Chemical for 2050.