



Kaori Fujiwara, Executive Officer, Frugra Group of Calbee, Inc., with packets of the popular Frugra breakfast cereal
Photo: Tadashi Aizawa

Rethinking Breakfast

Calbee, Inc., a leading food manufacturer, has dramatically increased sales using marketing techniques developed by – and targeted at – women.

KUMIKO SATO

CALBEE has set the goal of increasing the percentage of women in managerial positions to 30% by 2020. Based on the

belief of Akira Matsumoto, who was appointed as Chairman of the Board and CEO in 2009, that without female advancement there will be no future for Calbee, the

company established the “Diversity Committee” for the purpose of securing an environment for female advancement in 2010. The rate of women in managerial

positions increased from 5.9% in April 2010 to 23.4% in April 2017. Operating income has also increased each year, and reached an all-time high in 2016.

In particular, Calbee's Frugra Group, which is in charge of Frugra, a granola product containing cereals, dried fruits and nuts, is making remarkable achievements. Kaori Fujiwara, who leads the Frugra Group, took charge of the marketing of Frugra in 2012 and successfully doubled sales in just two years. She was appointed as manager in 2014. In fiscal year 2016, she succeeded in increasing sales about ten-fold compared with 2010, and was appointed as Executive Officer in 2017.

Frugra had achieved sales of three billion yen (US \$26 million) per year in the first twenty years following its launch in 1991, but Calbee focused on snacks as priority items and did not have higher expectations for the cereal category.

The first thing Fujiwara did was to highlight the benefits of Frugra in enabling consumers to easily take in food fiber and iron, which women tend to lack, even on busy mornings. She continued with a range of public relations activities, such as proposing a new way of eating Frugra by mixing it with yoghurt for breakfast. As a result of her efforts, working women in particular came to support Frugra without depending on large-

scale advertising activity.

Fujiwara says, "Many women buy Calbee's foods. It is therefore a very good strategy for female employees who know a lot about female needs to engage in product development and sales and marketing activities. Most of our team members are women, and some of them are raising children. Promotion plans and products that they invent reflect wishes from the consumer's standpoint."

Against the background of this business development are Calbee's reforms of work styles, such as a reduction of working hours and flexible workplaces including telework, as well as the company's efforts to promote women. Fujiwara says, "Our chairman often tells us to go home early and acquire knowledge by reading books during this spare time and treat our families with care and attention. I think he believes that enriching all employees' lives leads to the growth of the company."

Calbee also promotes the building of a system for fairly assessing performance and supports female employees in continuing to work willingly. In 2016, Calbee was awarded the Prime Minister's Award for "Leading Companies Where Women Shine" in recognition of these measures.

In 2017, Calbee saw the arrival of the second female factory manager in its history. She is

very considerate of many things and succeeded in achieving more smooth communication in the factory and creating a bright atmosphere.

Stressing the impact of diversity on the vitality in the workplace, Fujiwara says, "Of course, there are areas where men are superior. In addition, in terms of diversity, we have more foreign employees who have their own unique personalities and make interesting proposals."

Fujiwara was awarded the "Best Marketer Category" in "Woman of the Year 2016" by *Nikkei Woman*, a business magazine for women, as the woman who showed the best performance that year. Many young female employees of Calbee long to be like Fujiwara, and see her as a role model. For Calbee, which continues to push for reforms to achieve the goal of the percentage of women in managerial positions of 30%, Fujiwara, who pioneered that position, plays a major role for the female employees who follow her.

The environment in which the top management entrusts the company's future to female employees and the entire company as well as female employees energetically push for female advancement and diversity yields intangible effects as well as corporate sales. Calbee attracts attention as a pioneering model of such case. 