

What Impressed Us on Joining JAC were the Vitality and the Possibilities

Yamada: Back when you all joined JAC as first-generation new grads, I would say that the idea of “recruitment service” as a business was still not generally known. So why did you all choose to join JAC, despite this?



Sakuma: That’s right—I didn’t know much about “recruitment service” as an industry at that time. During my own job-hunting activities, I’d become interested in “consulting” as a job, and my investigations into this area ultimately led me to JAC.

The company information session for JAC was quite different from those held by other companies. The presentation about the company only lasted about 10 minutes; after this, we participants were invited to ask the employees any questions we liked. We heard from one employee that they had previously worked in overseas sales, considered changing jobs for a better work-life balance, registered with JAC as a candidate, and then were invited to join JAC itself as an

employee. The words of this employee, “There’s no other job where people express so much gratitude to you”, made a real impression on me. Another thing that really impressed me in a very positive way was the way the interviewer interacted with the candidates—creating a relaxed interview atmosphere where we talked over coffee, yet also dealing with the candidates as proper adults rather than mere students, including asking a lot of questions which were challenging for a student to answer.

Fukano: When I joined, people said it was a job market recession, and the general feeling among people I knew and those who had graduated before me was that if you could find any job, that was good enough. So when I learned there were jobs to be had in the world of job-change support/recruitment services, I felt that this kind of work had real social significance: “I could play a useful role here, if one of my friends wanted to change jobs”, I thought.

Although JAC is not a “foreign company”, the general atmosphere is like that of an overseas company. I longed to experience some working styles that would be a change from typical Japanese firms—from a more meritocratic way of working to business cards printed in English.



Kurozawa: I was fascinated by the fact that JAC has roots in both Japan and the UK. I felt that by working with JAC, I could learn both the Japanese way of doing things and how things are done in other countries. And I had high hopes that I could bring



about changes in the world—“make a difference”, you might say—through bringing together Japanese and non-Japanese working styles.

In the decades following World War II, major Japanese companies had continued to over-emphasise the hiring of new grads for regular positions; to help Japanese companies move forwards, it was now essential to increase options for the people working there, in the form of mid-career recruitment and job-switching. With the recruitment industry undergoing wide-ranging deregulation in 1999 for the first time in half a century, I felt that this industry was sure to play a major part in meeting such changing needs. JAC interested me not only because I felt that its business model was sure to grow in the years ahead, but also because working with JAC would let me get involved with and contribute to this business model.

Yamada: Although Mr Hayakawa is not actually part of the first generation, he is taking part in this round table discussion because he was the first person to become an executive officer

at JAC after starting as a new grad. You joined the company as a new graduate about four years after the company began hiring new graduates. Looking back on that time, please tell us some stories.

Hayakawa: In around 2006 when I joined JAC, the recruitment industry itself was a growing business, and was getting popular among job-seeking students. What made me interested in JAC was when I went to a company information session and an employee asserted, “Going forwards, JAC is going to become a listed company. Working for a listed firm means that you as an employee can grow too”. I thought this idea was interesting, and it spurred me on to learn about JAC in more detail. As I investigated, I was struck by JAC’s high level of contribution towards those seeking to change jobs. At other companies, I felt, you could not engage in work that had such impact on people as individuals.

Yamada: I do think that we all felt that there was something “cool” about the way JAC had started overseas and then expanded into Japan; however, listening to what everyone else here has said, it’s evident that we also had high expectations about JAC’s services and business model, which could help to build a new era going forwards.



FIRST GENERATION OF NEW GRADS

Round Table Discussion: JAC’s First Generation of New Grads

JAC’s ongoing growth has been supported by the people who were its first generation of new grads. Having grown alongside JAC, what challenges have they taken on, and what have they achieved?

JAC began to hire its first new graduates (“new grads”) in 2002. As they took their places in a business that was undergoing transformation amid some dramatic new growth strategies, what did these new grads see around them? Furthermore, what roles did they play in supporting JAC’s growth? As employees who joined JAC immediately after graduating from university and have been spending their entire career with JAC, the first generation of new grads deeply understand the company’s vision and culture and take pride in their work. We asked them and the fifth generation of new grads who is now executive officer to talk about what it was like back then and their thoughts on the future of JAC.

Hiroki Yamada
Executive Director,
Head of Sales
(Joined JAC in
2003 as a mid-
career hire)



Toshihiro
Kurozawa
Principal Analyst
Corporate Planning
Division
(Joined JAC in 2002 as a
first-generation new grad)



Shoko Sakuma
Senior Manager
Executive Division
(Joined JAC in 2002 as a
first-generation new grad)



Kensuke Fukano
Head of Kobe Office
(Joined JAC in 2002 as a
first-generation new grad)



Tokuji Hayakawa
Sales Director,
East Japan, Section 2
(Joined JAC in 2006 as a
fifth-generation new grad)





A Place to Take on Challenges: That’s Why We Chose to Stay With JAC



Yamada: JAC itself had no prior experience training young employees who didn’t know anything. After joining the company as the first generation, did you experience any difficulties, when training systems were far from complete?

Sakuma: When I joined there was hardly any training: it was pretty much “Get stuck in and start doing sales!” from the very start. With little formal training, I would say we got our training from the pointers and feedback we received from people outside the company. Because of this, I felt quite envious of people in other companies, who got to experience fully developed induction training for new grads. I just tried to learn as fast as I could, taking my cues from the mid-career employees at the company who were already battle-hardened and had established track records when they started, and I tried to master everything they were doing.

Fukano: Among the mid-career employees, there were a lot of people who had come from major companies. In the days after I had just joined JAC, I tried to copy what I saw those people doing, as a starting point. When you are sent out to do door-to-door sales on your third day at a company, you really don’t know anything at all about how to carry out business negotiations. In such circumstances, when your more-experienced colleagues are people with experience working at major Japanese companies, learning from them effectively amounts to “learning how things are done at the big firms”. I felt that if I learned how these experienced colleagues worked, I would at least be able to attain the kind of standard that society expects for a working person, and so I studied not just the way they did their jobs, but their behaviour, and even the way they went out for drinks and

enjoyed their free time (laughs).
Yamada: Just to elaborate on what you’ve said, what kind of differences did you see between the mid-career employees and the new grads?
Kurozawa: Basically, JAC adopted a very fair approach from the time I joined JAC, with neither group being prioritised over the other. If I had to say either way, I would say that perhaps we new grads had a stronger attachment to the company.
Fukano: Yes, I agree. I never felt there was any kind of barrier between the new grads and the mid-career hires, nor did I feel there were any divisions between the two groups.

What I do feel, though, is that the new grads at JAC are “the ones who never gave up on JAC”. It’s a little ironic, given that I was doing recruitment service as my job, but the fact is that as a new grad, I had no experience of companies other than JAC since I’d joined. Needless to say, the idea of switching jobs did cross my mind at times, yet I’ve stayed the course with JAC right up to the present day. And I would say that the reason why I didn’t switch jobs is because I never gave up on the job that was in front of me. I’m really proud of that.
Yamada: As Fukano-san says, you are all people who kept going with our work at JAC and never quit. Can everyone tell us their reasons for doing so?

Kurozawa: A great feature of JAC is the way you can start up your own new projects yourself, and provided these get good evaluations, you can move forwards with them as you like. I’ve had numerous experiences where something started off as a small project and then grew into something much bigger. When you can explore uncharted territory in this way through a process of trial and error, it helps you grow as a person and helps your company grow too, creating a real sense of motivation.

Hayakawa: For me, one attractive feature of JAC is the way



things are never “quiet”, but in a good way! (laughs) You are always taking on the next new challenge in your work, and the domains you are working in, the roles you play and your responsibilities are changing all the time. It gives you motivation and a real sense of your own personal growth. This feeling—that “There’s no limits to what I can do”—is the real thrill of working at JAC and is probably the reason why I’ve continued to work here.

Yamada: For new grads, they felt that their own personal growth and the growth of the company were bound together in a tangible way. It was this that gave them a sense of motivation and increased their sense of attachment to the company.

Continuing to Grow as Professionals

Yamada: Just to change the subject for a moment, do you think things have changed since then, or remained largely the same? And if some things have remained the same, what are they? Tell us what you think JAC’s universal values are.

Sakuma: Although accomplishing the work given to you is important, employees at JAC are also expected to think for themselves and take on challenges. I think this is a universal value of JAC.

Fukano: JAC provides all kinds of environments where people of all kinds can take on challenges. What’s more, you can take on challenges multiple times. The idea that mistakes and failures are just par for the course, and that it is fine to keep working on a challenge in pursuit of growth, is an idea you find at JAC.

At JAC, we are always told to keep growing! (laughs) You are always given many chances to try things, provided you have the motivation to do it, and the company will help to drive forwards the things that employees have tried to do. That is really important. I believe that the moment when you feel “What I’ve got right now is already enough” marks the start of a person’s decline.

Hayakawa: JAC’s goal of becoming No. 1 in the world is a reason for our ongoing spirit of challenge and is part of our corporate culture, I feel. I think one of the reasons why we have grown into such a major company is because we have always got things done by thinking together as “one team” about how to tackle things.

Yamada: A major feature of JAC is the mindset of constantly taking on new challenges and growing. I think we have got to where we are today because of our vision of offering services that are second to none, and the pride we feel in ourselves as a company with an ongoing spirit of challenge.

Fukano: If I might add something: JAC is also a company that aims for both quality and quantity. I often heard that trying to do both these things at once is an impossible task, but I believe that this strategy has helped us stand out from our competitors.



JAC makes sure that a single consultant is in charge of dealing with a company and the candidates for that company. I hear that at other companies, this is considered something that simply cannot be done. The reason we have managed this at JAC lies in our “Philosophy & Policy”, JAC’s management philosophy, and in the professional mindset that it thoroughly instils in its employees.

Yamada: We’ve been able to hear opinions that could only come from those of you who have been active in an environment that fosters growth with a balance of “Freedom & Discipline”. Let’s conclude by asking everyone what contributions they think they can make going forwards.



Sakuma: Given that my job actually involves giving career advice to candidates, I think I should be constantly striving to boost my own career too. I want to become the kind of person my customers will want to approach for assistance and build up their trust. I think that aiming to

do this job as well as possible and working to improve myself constantly and learn all the time, are actually the same things.

And at the same time as aiming to become a true professional myself, I want to try to help those around me to do this as well. That is actually another reason why I have continued working with JAC. When I came back to the workplace after being away for a while due to parental leave, I really noticed the comfortable way people approach exchanging views within their teams and engaging with clients. We think together about how to become true professionals, including all the concrete details. I want to learn more about this with the people around me, and push forwards with ideas that I myself have communicated to others.

Kurozawa: I am a big fan of both JAC and the recruitment industry, so I want to let the world know about the significance of this work and what a great job it is.

Fukano: I don’t think JAC is quite there yet in terms of name recognition. Just going off-topic for a moment, but the other day I gave a talk on “careers” at a primary school. I introduced myself by saying that my work involves helping people to switch jobs. As you can imagine, some well-known major company names came up in the discussion. I’d love my kids to be able to think that “My dad works at JAC, a famous company!” one day.

Hayakawa: Looking ahead to the future of JAC, I want to expand our service still further. The idea of continuing to grow is an interesting prospect and will require us to bring about all sorts of changes; I believe that continuing to take on new challenges is sure to lead to growth.

Yamada: It has been most enjoyable listening to everyone’s views. I learned that our participants as former “new grads” have all continued to take on new challenges together with JAC in our respective roles. This round table discussion has helped us all to understand how these efforts have assisted with the growth of the company. Based on this spirit of challenge and pride, let’s continue to develop the JAC of the future.

