

## Growing through wide-ranging experiences, from electronic materials to nutrition

徐 炯

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1999: Graduated from Shanghai International Studies University (SISU)  
with bachelor degrees in Japanese Language and International Trade

1999: Joined Mitsui & Co. (Shanghai) Ltd., Chemical Department

2017: Transferred to Nutrition and Agriculture Department (current position).



**Q: What surprised you the most after joining Mitsui?**

**A:**

As a newcomer to the workplace, everything felt very fresh to me. For example, the relationship between superior and subordinate in the company was not as serious and tense as I had imagined. The top manager, the general manager and

the seniors in the department were very friendly and encouraged me to speak up with my own ideas from a freshman perspective.

What surprised me most at that time was the strong support from the company and the proactive utilization of new talent, and this experience has continued to inspire me till now.

In my early days at the company, many Japanese manufacturers came to invest in Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. The need to import hundreds of different kinds of materials for manufacturing advanced electronic parts posed significant challenges in ensuring stable procurement and cost control for the factories.

The chemical department, where I worked at the time, proposed a one-stop package supply service program. The business model was totally new to the company, and I never thought that I would be appointed as the key person for the project in my second year at Mitsui. I was involved in the whole process from the initial feasibility study to the analysis of each material, and the formulation and implementation of the overall plan.

Through negotiating with team members, researching the import rules and tax exemption policies of the materials, screening domestic substitutes, and searching for logistics partners, we finally designed the optimal solution, and secured orders successfully.

During the 15 years this business operated we ensured the stable production of our client's factories and continuously optimized the supply chain, realizing Mitsui's value with innovation, concentration and professionalism. It was an unforgettable and rewarding experience for me.

**Q: Please briefly introduce your business, your team, and your role.**

**A:**

When I first joined Mitsui Shanghai, I was assigned to the Chemical Department, mainly responsible for the area of advanced materials, including import and domestic sales of various electronic materials. Several years later, I was transferred to the newly established Nutrition and Agriculture Department to meet the company's needs for new business development. I am mainly responsible for the nutrition sector. Currently, I am leading a nutrition team consisting of five members. I position myself as a pioneer of new businesses, a supervisor of a team, and also a supporter of team members. I feel that times are changing, and the specific businesses are changing, but Mitsui's culture of "Challenge and Innovation", open-mindedness, and valuing each individual's personality is so precious, that I hope to continue upholding it in my work.

**Q: Transferring from electronic materials to nutrition means you ventured into a completely new field. What kind of challenges did you face, and and insights did you gain?**

**A :**

Together with the development of its economy in recent years, China's health-care market is growing rapidly. The growing demand for delicious natural and healthy foods, as well as personal care and pet health, are creating a market with high potential.

At first, I was looking for business opportunities based on my previous experience, but I soon realized that the business environment was very different from that of the electronic materials market. I found that the most significant difference between electronic materials and nutritional products is that, in addition to

quantifiable global standardized specifications, customers' demands for nutritional products are characterized by strong local and personal preferences in terms of taste, nourishment habits, product forms, aroma preferences, etc.

Therefore, I realized that rather than focusing on importing materials with proven success overseas, we should focus on the needs of the Chinese market. This includes identifying the key issues, such as sugar reduction, then analyzing and introducing Mitsui's resources, and working in close cooperation with our local partners in a way that leverages the core strengths of both parties.

Following the above approach, our team has developed several businesses, including investment, contract processing, and trading, and will continue to explore more new business opportunities in functional food materials, healthy food, and animal health.

**Q : After joining as a fresh graduate, what are the reasons that have kept you working at Mitsui for more than 20 years ?**

**A :**

I applied for the company's Executive Education Program that aims to develop leaders of the next generation, and attended a one-year program at Beijing University's Guanghua School of Management starting in the fall of 2023. Many classmates were surprised that I had worked for the same company for more than twenty years.

Working at Mitsui will never be boring. I can see my growth through every business task I carry out. All the difficulties I have overcome and experiences I have had allow me to face the future more confidently, even in areas I have never experienced before.

Along with the company's strategic development, the business fields I have

experienced extend from smart phones and LCD electronic materials to clean energy wind turbine blades, ship lightweight composite materials, and now nutritional food and pet health care. The business area I am responsible for also extends from Asia to Africa. In my daily work I am constantly widening my perspective and diversifying my experience, so that I can positively face and learn new things.

In addition, thanks to Mitsui's policy of "placing the right people in the right positions", we have comprehensive talent with cross-department/cross-unit rotation experience like me, and also experts who specialize in a particular area of business. The fact that I can work with these skilled and unique colleagues is also what keeps me stimulated and feeling fresh in my work at Mitsui.

Not only business strategies, the company's transformation in personnel systems also often surprises me. In recent years, new working styles such as the staggered work-hour system, home-office policy, and hourly-leave system have been introduced, which support my personal and family life. This peace of mind and sense of balance between life and work, also gives me more energy to concentrate on my work.

