

“Think Big, Start Small” Learning at Mitsui & Co.

张彦

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2012 : Graduated from Fudan University with a
Master's degree in Life Science

2012: Joined Mitsui & Co. (Shanghai) Ltd.,
Basic Chemicals Second Department



Q: What surprised you the most after joining Mitsui?

A:

What surprised me most when I joined the company was the breadth of Mitsui & Co.'s business. As a general trading company, Mitsui is involved in all aspects of global economic life, including energy, minerals, basic chemicals, steel, materials,

foods, agricultural chemicals, machinery, and ships.

Mitsui has developed a global matrix management system consisting of business and regional axes. On the business axis, we collect and analyze information from various regions to formulate cross-regional promotion policies and goals for our business units and coordinate resources from various regions to achieve our business goals. The regional axis creates new business by leveraging partner and customer information from the various business units in the region where they are most knowledgeable about regional trends. I believe that this kind of matrix management has great practical significance for Mitsui, which operates globally across industry boundaries, and at the same time embodies a corporate culture that values innovation and rigor at the same time, which at first glance may seem contradictory.

Q: Please briefly describe your responsibilities, your team, and your role within it.

A:

I am currently responsible for the Phenolic Ketone Industrial Chain business team in the Basic Chemicals Division, leading three product groups with a total of 12 members. My main daily tasks can be divided into three categories: 1) business management, 2) resource coordination, and 3) personnel evaluation.

In addition to setting goals for each product group and conducting business management from both the business and regional perspectives, it is also important to coordinate internal and external resources and reduce costs to achieve these goals. In addition, we break down and set individual goals for each team member and evaluate them appropriately.

Different products naturally have different markets and different ways of doing

business. So far, my team's business model has been mainly importing and domestic trade, and we have built relationships of trust with domestic customers and overseas suppliers by following their supply and demand information. However, the rapid growth of domestic production capacity in the basic chemicals sector has reversed the supply-demand balance, and as the focus has shifted from import-oriented to export-oriented, we too have converted to an export business. For example, unlike imports and domestic trade, in the export business, overseas customers place more importance on the stability of the Chinese supplier's business, product quality and service, etc. Therefore, we had to respond to various situations by devising ways of communication, etc.

Q: Of the various training programs you have taken at Mitsui, which one was particularly memorable for you?

A:

The one that left a particularly strong impression on me was the Change Leader Program (CLP) that I attended in 2019. In the CLP program, overseas employees of Mitsui & Co. gather at the Tokyo Head Office for a two-week training program, where overseas employees deepen their understanding of management and culture, question and rethink their own businesses, functions, and teams empathically, and the trained members promote change at Mitsui "from the outside in"!

Q: What did you experience in the CLP program and how has it affected or changed you?

A:

I was impressed with the relationships I developed with employees in each

region of the company during the training, especially the direct communication with the company's management team. These conversations have helped me think more deeply about how we can improve our business today, as well as broaden my perspective and help me think about the big picture.

My daily work consists of solving various problems. I have always focused only on the problems and facts in front of me to solve the problems, but through this training and dialogue with management, I realized the importance of thinking about things from a bird's eye view, and while thinking big about our goals, we can also think about the small things we need to do every day. I have developed the habit of "thinking big and starting small" to achieve my goals by making changes in myself and my team, starting with the small things that I do every day.

Q: Why did you join MITSUI & CO. (SHANGHAI) LTD. as a new graduate and continue to work there?

A:

The main reasons I continue to work here are the growth opportunities, the expectation of room for growth, and the friendships that I value at work.

Working for Mitsui has provided me with continuous growth opportunities. As a multinational company, we have a broad business scope and multiple development opportunities. After more than 10 years with the company, I have been exposed to different areas of the business, participated in various projects, and had the opportunity to continue to learn and grow. The training programs and promotion mechanisms offered by the company have continuously improved my professional and leadership skills.

In retrospect, while working at Mitsui, I have met many people of different nationalities, backgrounds, and personalities, which made me aware of the many

differences between people and gave me a clearer understanding of the diversity of the world. Through these work collaborations, I have become close friends with many people, which I consider to be the most important kind of interpersonal relationship. I believe that Mitsui will continue to provide opportunities to meet more interesting people in the future as the company develops its business in different countries and sectors.

