

Contribution: Memories of My Tenure as CTO



Since joining Valqua as an executive officer in charge of development of products and merchandise in November 2003, I have been working here for as long as 15 years including the last couple of years as a technical adviser. During my 15-year career at Valqua, I worked as CTO for 4.5 years from April 2010. Dr. Igarashi, my predecessor, has a broad knowledge and insight in chemistry ranging from basic to applied chemistry. I am grateful for all his advice during my CTO days. Since I was focused on practical techniques, his advice was invaluable. As his style as CTO was easygoing, I felt huge pressure when I was appointed as CTO. That was the first time I truly realized and admired his elegant business style as CTO.

One of my most impressive memories is my first business trip to the Nara Office on my first working day at Valqua. The president at that time asked Mr. Joya, a managing director, to show me around the office. I also had a chance to give a ‘policy’ speech in front of all the staff of the office. I remember that I emphasized how R&D should contribute to company earnings. These days, the idea that company R&D should contribute to company earnings has become common, but at that time, it was considered that R&D should be pursued with a medium- to long-term vision. This approach was like that of public-sector research institutions. This situation was not limited to Valqua; many companies had the same idea. So, when I emphasized profit-oriented R&D in my first policy speech, the researchers were reluctant to accept it. My idea was too audacious at that time.

Meanwhile, the business trip was just one day, and I remember it well. Because the Nara Office is located in the countryside, I had to change trains at Kyoto to the Kintetsu Line to get to the Nara Office (it’s quicker to visit Shanghai!). Thereafter, during my tenure as CTO, I visited Nara many times, but unfortunately I have never visited the area near the office other than Kashiharajinguu. I hope to have the chance to travel there again.

In R&D, the creation and utilization of human networks are important along with personnel training. Especially, in China, close cooperation with academics is indispensable in research and development. At that time, I had conducted joint studies with universities in Japan and Western countries, but not with Chinese academics. In Japan, there was much discussion as to the roles of researchers at public institutions including universities in terms of contributing to society. So, we came to stipulate very specific results for the joint studies in advance. In contrast, there was no such discussion in China. When we explained the expected results to Chinese academics and tried to set goals for an R&D program, they balked. This made me realize that we need to seriously consider social and cultural backgrounds.

Recently, widely-applicable technological seeds are increasingly likely to come from totally different fields than in the past. So, it is important for us to open the door for research and to deepen communication with other companies and other R&D institutions. This gives researchers a global perspective which allows research institutions to continue evolving into organizations which can create great value. Such a pursuit of continuous evolution is our never-ending challenge.

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