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Aiming to be a company that gains the support of communities by fostering a win-win relationship with them

Ricoh Chubu Co., Ltd., is a regional sales supervising company that oversees six Ricoh Group sales companies in the Chubu region in Japan. Making use of its marketing style, in which sales representatives pay repeated visits to customers, Ricoh Chubu started “environmentally” communicating with customers by providing them with environmental information as well as information about Ricoh products. In line with its promotion of environmental communication with local governments, companies, media, and environmental NPOs, Ricoh Chubu began efforts to share not only information but also its environmental conservation mission with local communities. Based on such keywords as *employees*, *customers*, and *local communities*, the company strives to achieve sustainable environmental management while contributing to the conservation of local environments.

Sample Activity 1 Green Promotion

The green promotion program, which aims to tie marketing activities with environmental conservation/community contributions, is a subsidy grant scheme for local citizen groups engaged in environmental conservation activities. In this program, Ricoh Chubu sales representatives explain to customers buying Ricoh's environmentally conscious products how environmental conservation and community contributions are important, and if the customer believes in what the company is doing, the sales representative will ask the customer to fill in an eco card with their company's name and other information. Ricoh Chubu then decides on the amount of the subsidy according to the total number of points on eco cards collected from such customers. Grantees are chosen by an eco-hiiki (eco-favor) vote by customers, environmental NPOs, scholars, citizen groups that are former grantees, and Ricoh Chubu employees. In fiscal 2004, 10 organizations were granted a subsidy, and our employees participated in environmental conservation activities organized by those organizations.



Eco Card

Sample Activity 2 E-koto (good thing) Project

In the E-koto (good thing) project, Ricoh Chubu encourages its employees to voluntarily engage in environmental conservation activities. Aims of the project are to provide appropriate opportunities for employees who have ideas about how things can be improved and to develop those ideas into actual activities in which all employees can participate. One employee is chosen from each of the company's divisions to become a member of the E-koto committee and give his/her opinion and ideas at monthly committee meetings. The sorting-sommelier certification system, in which participants can enjoy themselves, had its start in this project.



E-koto Committee

Q

What is your opinion on sustainable environmental management at sales companies?

A

It is important for us to combine our marketing activities with environmental conservation efforts.

Ricoh Chubu, a sales company, cannot merely copy the efforts made by production sites, such as making production lines more energy efficient and improving productivity through Zero-Waste-to-Landfill activities at the plants, and achieve similar success. Sustainable environmental management, which consists of both environmental conservation and economic efficiency, cannot be achieved solely by conserving energy and reducing paper consumption at offices. It is therefore important for us to promote sustainable environmental management through our strength in fostering a relationship with customers. To provide customer satisfaction, sales companies offer customers information about environmental regulations in addition to product information. Sharing environmental information with customers is the fastest way to gain their support in terms of environmental conservation.

Q

Could you specify the activities you are currently undertaking?

A

We are currently undertaking activities that encourage the participation of employees, customers, and communities.

It is important for Ricoh Chubu to create a new mechanism and internal system, with the environment taken into consideration, to appeal to customers and communities. Our green promotion activities (See below.), which started in June 2002, combine marketing activities with environmental conservation and social contributions. Coming into contact with a variety of community organizations as well as customers makes Ricoh Chubu, which provided B-to-B solutions in the past, now capable of engaging in B-to-C communication. In April 2004, a sorting-sommelier certification system (See below.) was established in the hope that employees would enjoy learning about the role of a sorting master and share their knowledge of environmental conservation with others. In addition to internal activities, sorting masters enthusiastically introduce Ricoh Group environmental conservation activities to customers, communities, and other stakeholders.

Q

What are you aiming for?

A

We are aiming to contribute to the revitalization of local communities while establishing an environmental management system.

Materializing ideas for green promotion and sorting-master schemes and cementing relationships with stakeholders helped build up Ricoh Chubu's reputation among local communities while promoting the awareness of our employees. Accordingly, sales representatives are now talking to customers differently; they sometimes successfully close deals because customers are interested in the company's environmental features. In developing environmental communication with customers and communities, it is important to meet and hold discussions with stakeholders who believe that a sustainable social system is needed and share the company's environmental conservation mission with them. Such face-to-face communication will establish the role that Ricoh Chubu is to play in the community. Further communication with and contributions to local communities will realize the sustainable environmental management relevant to our operations.

Sample Activity 3

Sorting-Sommelier Certification System

A sorting sommelier is a person who is able to properly sort waste and verbally communicate how and why it should be sorted. After the January 2004 internal announcement that applicants to the program will be accepted, those who applied participated in study meetings, using an approximately 200-page textbook, and took the certification exam. Thirty-eight employees have been qualified as sorting-sommelier thus far. Prior to the exam, applicants examined the recycling system of sorted waste, and several improvements were made as a result, including the localization of waste sorting rules in buildings, by promoting communication with management companies in charge of the buildings where our offices are set up, cleaning companies, local governments, and NPOs.



Sommelier badge



The first sorting sommeliers

Sorting-Sommelier Certification System

(1) Sorting

(2) Written Test

(3) Role Playing
(Case Selection)



Plastic bags, each containing 10 types of waste, are prepared in the same quantity as the number of candidates for the exam.



The candidates choose one plastic bag each.



They sort all of the waste.



They attach slips with their names on to the sorted waste.



They place the waste in relevant sorting boxes according to Ricoh Chubu rules.