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2018 March Issue (March. 8, 2018)

Topics from Sonoda & Kobayashi

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called women “Japan’s most underutilized resource“ and vowed to create a society in which women more actively participated. Sonoda & Kobayashi is proud that it has given women, who occupy nearly half of management positions, plenty of opportunities to shine. To honor Woman’s Day, Sonoda & Kobayashi is pleased to publish a special newsletter highlighting the talented women who contribute so much to our firm.

“Our philosophy to share equal opportunities and responsibilities regardless of gender dates back to the firm's foundation. And as a firm that is still young and growing, as a firm that holds the ambition of building a workplace where everyone shares joy in the achievements of others and appreciates the time spent with colleagues, we do not have room for prejudice of any kind.”

Yoshitaka Sonoda, Managing Partner

Yumiko TOCHINO
Chief Operating Officer

Ms. Tochino, one of the founding members of Sonoda & Kobayashi, has actively helped build and expand the firm since its creation. She has developed a broad range of skills in her different positions, as an English to Japanese translator, as well as a paralegal and expert in Trademark and Design. Keen on delivering the best quality work for our clients, along with improving work efficiency and everyone’s satisfaction, she quickly developed a work flow and quality control system in our firm. Climbing the so-called “corporate ladder,” the marathon runner and mother of two, became a shoo-in to supervise engineers, IT, and administrative departments. Ms. Tochino became partner of Sonoda & Kobayashi IP Services Company Ltd in December 2014. Acting currently as Chief Operating Officer, she coordinates and supervises the general work flow of the firm, and more specifically, oversees in total 40 of our members.

Yoko Nagatomo
Translation department manager

Ms. Nagatomo entered our firm as a passionate English to Japanese translator. Her major in the performance arts, her qualification as a guide-interpreter and her previous career as a hotel concierge helped her feel at ease and build confidence in an English speaking environment. Upon joining our firm in 2014, she rapidly took over the management of our Translation Department, organizing its work flow and supervising a team of 20 members. The mother of a 6 year-old, Ms. Nagatomo enjoys dancing, skateboarding, and stays fascinated by how the English and Japanese languages can differ, which gives her an insight on how humans are different and similar at the same time.

“As Japan’s gender gaps in income and leadership opportunities remain prevalent, I feel grateful to have been given such interesting challenges and responsibilities early on in my career, upon joining Sonoda & Kobayashi.”

Diane Beylier-Cyranoski

Chihiro OGAWA

Administrative department manager

In her previous work life, Ms. Ogawa was a system engineer. For the past ten years, she has been navigating, with no difficulty, into our database, docketing software and clients’ portals. Though she is an expert concerning paralegal matters, she keeps herself abreast of all IP law changes. A flamenco dancer and mother of two, Ms. Ogawa became manager of our Administrative Department in 2017 and oversees a team of 20 –mainly female – colleagues.

Nicole BIGLER

Director of International Affairs

As a karate champion during her younger, athletic years, Nicole Bigler is used to fighting to impose her talents, especially in male-dominated fields. Coming back to Japan after having spent an exchange year during university, she deepened her understanding of the Japanese language and culture before joining our firm in 2013. Making the best of her previous managerial positions, and after quickly learning the differences between IP law and clients’ needs, she succeeded in gaining the trust of our clientele and the approval of our Japanese co-workers. She currently heads the Department of International Affairs and is a member of the board of directors.

“In a society that is often viewed by outsiders as misogynistic, Sonoda & Kobayashi fiercely defies this stereotype. With a high percentage of female employees, many of whom are in high level positions, I feel positive towards my future career progression as a woman.”

Natalie Crick

Harumi KOKAJI

Patent Attorney

Ms. Kokaji is one of our patent attorneys who specialize in telecommunications. As an inventor of a dozen patents concerning wireless technology during her position as a researcher, she took the patent bar in 2006 and joined us to pursue her career in the IP field. She has been, since then, challenging herself going abroad to meet our clients’ needs and to advise them on Japanese patent law, becoming one of our key female patent attorneys to represent Sonoda & Kobayashi out of Japan.

Keiko SHISHIDA

Patent Attorney

Ms. Shishida is a Chemical expert with a unique background. Indeed, before becoming a patent attorney and joining our team in 2014, she spent 11 years in the police force. Pursuing her dream to become a detective – a very rare position for a woman in Japan -she put into practice her technical skills to work as a chemical analyst playing a key role in investigations. Although women represented only 10% of the police force at that time, her determination led her to a chief position after a few years. Her interest in IP started with getting a patent on her own invention of a chemical substance detection kit. Having been motivated from this experience, she is an essential asset in our domestic department, panelist and speaker in IP events, particularly successful at gaining new Japanese clients and at further prosecuting and defending the IP rights of our current Japanese clientele.

“ As a female foreigner in Japan, I feel very at ease working at Sonoda & Kobayashi. The mature environment provides great opportunities for career promotion to woman. ”

Yan Hui Wang

Fumi KATOH, PhD
Patent Engineer

Dr. Katoh is an expert in the field of animal physiology, who joined the Life Science Department of our firm in 2014. Author of many publications during her career, she received her PhD for her research concerning the osmotic and ionic regulation mechanisms of bodily fluids, and just finished drafting a thesis on studies on product by process claims. While working full time, she recently undertook a master program of IP law, graduating in March 2018. Having performed post-doctoral research at the University of Alberta and St. Francis Xavier University in Canada, she has a tremendous command of the English language and a natural ease in a foreign working environment. Fumi Katoh has been traveling abroad to advise our clients, make presentations on recent case law and has become a key representative of our biology prosecution and litigation teams.

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Our Firm

SONODA & KOBAYASHI, an intellectual property law firm, offers dependable legal services for intellectual property in Japan. Our multinational team of 80 experts in technology, law, languages and international communication has served companies from around the world and has gained a reputation for thoroughness and reliability. Our high standards, expertise and team work have defined us since the founding of our firm in 1998.

Visit Us

Sonoda & Kobayashi is located in Shinjuku, one of the main business districts in Tokyo. We welcome visitors and look forward to seeing you at [our office](#).



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