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Interview: **Creation out of a Global Human Network**

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Interview: Creation out of a Global Human Network

Kaori Sasaki

UNICUL International, Inc., President and Representative Director

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1983: Graduated from Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University. Worked as an interpreter during her student years.

1987: Founded UNICUL International, Inc.

1989: Founded a non-profit organization, Network for Aspiring Professional Women (NAPW)

1989: Won a New Business Conference Entrepreneur Special Award

Since 1993: Hosted the Women Entrepreneurs' Seminar

1996: Created The 1st International Conference for Women in Business

Worked for six years as a reporter for TV Asahi "News Station"

Currently working as a newscaster of "CBS Document" on TBS

Publication: "Ideas of Give and Given", Just System, "I Work When Pregnant", WAVE Publishers. Translation: "Only the Paranoid Survive"

There are many jobs in the world that people expect to be done very well but complain about when they are done a bit poorly, even though these jobs require high-level skills and experience. Typical examples are interpretation and translation. Just speaking another language does not make someone an interpreter or translator. In spite of that, many clients just want their work interpreted (translated) and they often do not even intend to meet beforehand with their translator or to give him or her the necessary materials for their jobs to be interpreted (translated).   UNICUL International, Inc. has a network with over 1600 language professionals and provides interpretation/translation services in over 70 languages. It is a typical example of a virtual corporation, which draws a lot of attention today. The real value of the communication consulting company that President Sasaki advocates is far beyond "normal interpretation and translation".

1

President Sasaki is a newscaster, an organizer of a network for career women, and a wife, as well as the president of UNICUL International, Inc. Her secret for handling a number of different projects at the same time is a computer network. She says there are thousands upon thousands of networks currently out there are "nets that don't work", and that real networking is "making the nets work". What is "making the nets work"? This interview will give us a hint about it.

If I say that she is an entrepreneur who doesn't seem like one, I wonder if it may cause a misunderstanding about her. However, without placing an adjective, "nice", before the noun, "entrepreneur", we cannot talk about the activities of UNICUL International, Inc. and President Sasaki. Everyone who knows her would agree. UNICUL International, Inc. exists because of a part-time interpretation job she did as a student. The process of starting up is, in a sense, natural. However, the business system of the company is profound. It is safe to say that since the company understands the principle of networks, it exists. It looks as if anyone can do it, but the company does not allow any other companies to catch up. Probably, the strength of the natural attitude lies in the foundation of its management.

We asked President Sasaki what is going to be created from the global human network, (This is not superficial as in "human network").

Choice to Start a Business

Editor: I heard that you worked as an interpreter when you were a student. Were you considering starting a business back then?

Mrs. Sasaki: Every time I tell this story, everyone says that they cannot believe it. When I was at university, I wasn't the type of person who spoke in front of people.   I didn't take leadership in any projects, and I could say that I didn't have a big vision of my life.   I was rather a traditional Japanese woman, and I always wore a skirt and high heels.   I believed that women had to walk one step behind men.   At the age of 19 as a university student, I went to America to study for nine months on a scholarship. When I was invited with "Ladies first", I refused by saying, "women are supposed to walk behind men".   And I didn't even walk beside a man, and, of course, I didn't walk

in front of a man—even once.　I always walked behind men. As that kind of university student, I didn't even think to start a business.

My dream was to marry at the age of 24 or 25, have a child or two before the age of 30, and to welcome my husband home from work sitting on the floor, bowing to him and saying, "welcome home".

Editor: When did you start the business?

Mrs. Sasaki: I founded the company while I worked as a freelancer. I was 28 years old.

Editor: Can you please tell us your history from freelance interpreter to the foundation of the company?

Mrs. Sasaki: Even though I was working as an interpreter, I wasn't thinking of it as a career.　I thought the same way I had as a university student; I had to have a child before the age of 30.

It seems that there are two types of Japanese people studying in America; those who love America and those who don't. I was the latter. I had a sense of "I don't like Americans" but on the other hand I was working as an interpreter.　My parents told me, "Kaori, what you say doesn't match what you do. You tell us that you don't like Americans, but you work with them every day as their interpreter. You are very strange." I also questioned myself. I decided to travel to America for one month at the age of 24. I wanted to find out why I didn't like America; whether it was because my way of thinking was fixed at the age of 19 and my vision was narrow and biased. It was a short trip but a big turning point of my life, I think.

I visited some people I met when I was there the first time and saw and talked with my friends.　I found out about America again and came to like it a lot.　The bias toward women doesn't exist in the American society.　Everyone listened to me and was very friendly. We could do anything we wanted to do.　To me, it was freedom.

One day, a Japanese woman and her African-American musician husband invited me to dinner.　He is very famous now, but back then they were newlyweds and he had just become a professional. They were a very strange couple; they didn't really understand

each other well so I interpreted for them, even though I was invited to dinner. Sitting at the table, I wondered how they could make their marriage work.   And then, I started talking to her husband about my view of my life: "I'll have to get married soon and have a child by the age of 30.   I was born as a woman, so it is my fate to give birth.   This is my role.   To get pregnant around 28 or 29, I have to get married at 26 or 27.   So I must marry my current boyfriend."

He listened patiently until the end of the story and then he slowly and quietly said, "I have a little different point of view.   There is a saying that a child binds a married couple.   But in America, children leave home at 17 to enter the university. Most American universities have campus housing so they live on campus.   Even though you love your children deeply and raise them with care, they will leave the house after 17 years.   And you will have to spend the rest of your life with the person you love the second most.   There is nothing sadder than this.   So, I would rather love my spouse the most and grow in love with her and then think about children."

It was as if I had been hit on the head with a hammer.   My beliefs since childhood, such as the dream of welcoming my husband home while sitting on the floor, my ideas of a husband, my ideas of marriage, and my ideas of children were all were shattered instantly and I could almost hear the shattering. I thought about it again and reached the conclusion that I might not be happy if I married my then-boyfriend. As soon as I got back to Japan. I called him and said "Let's break up".   Then my life started (laugh).

I learned the way of thinking that my life is something I choose, from America and through English.   Male or female, we consider various things such as marriage, children, how to choose a job, and our role by gathering information and gaining experience.   Quite often later we realize how important our decisions or actions were. I think now that the brief talk with my friend during my second trip to America changed my future.

When you speak English, you quite often encounter the word "choice".   Choice is "*sentaku*" in Japanese. In English, they use the word "choice" like "Do you make a "choice" in your life and in every moment?" This way of thinking gives us a different approach to things such as whether or not we choose a man as a husband, whether or not we choose to give birth, what kind of family we want to have, what kind of job we choose, and so on.

4

In my case, I finally came to realize at the age of 24-25 that I should create my own life: it was my responsibility to choose my everyday experiences and life experiences, and my life in the past was an accumulation of my choices. And my approach to my work started to change.

A Guild of Interpreters to Share Jobs

Editor: Is that how you started the company?

Mrs. Sasaki: Yes. I didn't work every day as an interpreter, but I started coming up with ideas through my experiences. It is ironic, but I think one of the reasons I decided to start a business was because the information infrastructure wasn't very organized, certainly not like it is today.

About 15 years ago, there were no fax machines, word processors, beepers or cell phones. I lived alone at that time, so even when I took a telephone call for an interpreting assignment, there was no one to answer the phone for me if I wasn't home. If I was working on one job, I could not accept another job for a later time. All of the interpreters that worked on their own had this problem. Back then, an answering machine cost 150,000 yen. When the prices fell, I bought one at last, so I could accept more work.

I couldn't walk for nearly one month because I broke my leg. I had to cancel all the interpretation work that I had already accepted because I couldn't walk. If I did not work my income was zero. In that month, I realized the value of guaranteed income. I thought about a lot of things while I sat at home frustrated. I though about how I should design my life and how I would live if I didn't marry (I now considered marriage an option). Even if I worked as a freelance interpreter from age 30 to 40, there would be no guarantee that I would have work after that, and without work, I wouldn't have income. This is one of the reasons that I decided to start a company.

There were many reasons that I created the company, but my primary purpose was to build a financial foundation to manage productivity and livelihoods and to make a

system to assure income.　I started realizing gradually that the backbone of the system was the concept of "sharing".　I think that I found the idea of sharing jobs to be important because I was working in that era when we didn't have beepers or answering machines.

My fellow freelance interpreters agreed with the idea of sharing our jobs.　Everyone was thinking the same thing and suffering from the same thing. So I said to my friends, "Let's make a group", and we founded Linga Plus Network■1, and we started to share jobs.　When someone couldn't work, they would ask someone else to do the job.　In order for that system to function, gradually various "regulations" were made. For example, even though each member might have to ask someone to deal with her clients once because of other work, she basically should be in charge of the clients she had before the guild was formed. Or, as long as clients didn't ask for a particular interpreter, we would have to share the jobs.　As we kept working like this, the number of members increased from the original three or four people.　This was the forerunner of the current company.　I set up the group for the first time was when I was around 25. UNICUL International was created out of a "guild" of interpreters.

Editor:　I understand well the process of development from a freelance interpreter to a guild of interpreters.　Why did you consider making it a corporation?

■1
A network of interpreters/translators, Linga (language) and Plus (added-value)

Make the "Net" "Work"

Mrs. Sasaki: I had lived in a world that had nothing to do with management, so it didn't matter to me if I was working individually or as a part of the company, as long as I worked properly.　However, more client companies started telling me that it would be easier for them to make a contract with a company.　And I thought, "Okay then, let's make a company".　I didn't know how to found a company or the difference between a joint-stock company and a limited liability company. I went to a bookstore and bought a book on how to start a company, and while talking with my friends, we established

UNICUL International, Inc.

This is how I started; I had almost no knowledge about corporate management.   But, the reason why the company has grown was that we already had a number of clients who trusted us when we established the company.   Since we had excellent staff, jobs were coming in one after the other.   We didn't have to promote ourselves.

Editor: Don't you do any promotion of your company even now?

Mrs. Sasaki: It isn't quite like that. We actively advise those who inquire about us. Our basic policy is a network.   But we understand the word as "Make the net work".

"Net" is literally a "net".   It is to meet new people. Even when it is through formal exchange of our business cards, a "net" or connection between people begins.   The word *network* is a popular word now, so you can see the word in the media almost everyday. However, it looks like there are not many people who correctly understand the real meaning of the word.   Even though there is a net it is not a network if it isn't working. After we make the net work, it truly becomes a *network* for the first time.

The most important path of the network is "work".   I think everyone remembers the meaning of "work" is "*hataraku*". The majority of Japanese tried to memorize the meanings of English words through a dictionary, but the really important thing is to understand correctly the real meanings of the words that are hidden in many translations. There are several meanings in the word, "work": "to function", "to be useful", "to do well" and so on.   So if a person works, that means the person functions as a human and the person is doing something useful for others.   When someone says "I am working", he or she means "I am functioning".

The basic infrastructure used to establish a connection with other people is a net. Whether the net works or not depends on its participants.

Editor: I don't think you make all the nets of people work.

Mrs. Sasaki: No, you're right.   As they meet others, most people decide who will be beneficial for them.   I think it is a very selfish way of thinking.   I have a different way

of thinking. The network is not one-way but two-way communication.   Therefore, the starting point is whether or not we can do something useful for them and we want to do something for them.   The second point is whether or not they give us any response and how they respond to us.   When these two points are satisfied, the net starts working for the very first time.   Without satisfying these two points, I don't think the network functions.

A Consulting Company of Communication

Editor: Can we see UNICUL International as an agent of interpreters and translators?

Mrs. Sasaki: No, it is not an agent. UNICUL International is a consulting company in relation to communication in general.   I mentioned previously that a guild of interpreters became a company, but we are not a human resource company of interpreters and translators or a translation company.   We couldn't get a human resource agent license when we started the company even though we wanted to get one. Our company is a management company that conveys messages in other languages.

Let me explain it in more detail.   When people come to Japan and we interpret or translate for them, we will fail if we only interpret or translate as you hear or read; we cannot convey messages well in that way.   We understand what they want to say and advise them how to communicate in order to accomplish their goals. To do so, we need the ability of interpretation or translation but we have to go beyond that and advise our clients on marketing, editing and producing.   In order to do the jobs that interpreters and translators are expected to do, it is necessary to provide a total communication consultation.   I am surprised that there are many interpreter-like and translator-like people, and this is not good.

I would like to talk about what we do.   For example, we create bilingual homepages. An American company, Intel, has over 40,000 pages in English on the Internet.   We translate some parts of their homepage into Japanese at the request of Intel in Japan. Of course, we don't just replace English with Japanese.   It is important to convey the image of Intel to Japanese people.   Therefore, we have to choose which English pages should be translated, and when they agree with our suggestions, we rewrite the pages.

We are also in charge of the homepage design and linking the pages together as well.

We also work with Guerlain, a cosmetic company. We take part in things related to language, such as communication and public relations.   We advise them on copywriting and how to work with translators effectively in terms of making the brochures for the cosmetic products, press conferences, speeches of the company president, and so on.

"Normal" Business Finally Understood after 10 years

Editor: Did your clients understand what the communication consulting business was right away?

Mrs. Sasaki: It takes a long time.   In fact, we didn't merely do interpretation and translations jobs but through interpretation and translation we did very deep jobs in communications in general.   But it wasn't understood very well.   They kept saying, "Just interpret or translate properly.   That's all we want".   But being able to interpret or translate properly requires more than just being able to understand other language. However, our attitude toward the jobs and our performance in action were gradually appreciated, and the number of jobs beyond mere interpretation and translation that we were aiming for increased. It took us about 10 years to reach that level after the foundation of the company. I wondered so many times why we had many job offers. Then through the responses from the clients, I understood that was because we paid attention to details, moved well, worked quickly, brought extra information and so on.   They liked our additional performances on top of our English abilities. At this very moment, we have 1600 bilinguals and multi-linguals, and we can deal with more than 70 languages, including dialects. We have many people who can understand languages that I have never heard of. Such people make teams to give advice to our clients in addition to interpretation and translation.   Of course, we ask them to work through our company, and we confirm their fluency, not just their comprehension of the target language.   This is central to our business model.

The way we do to business has changed.   We used to accept any interpretation and translation jobs, but recently we receive inquiries from companies, we give them a presentation, and then we carry out a big project for them.

Virtual Company Supported by the Network

Editor: I heard that your employees are all women.

Mrs. Sasaki: Yes. I have seven full-time employees, all women.   However, of the 1600 interpreters and translators that we ask to work for us, I think 40% are men.

UNICUL is a kind of a virtual company making full use of the human network and computer network.   We used to send jobs through NIFTY-Serve or by fax but now we take advantage of Internet.   We established a homepage called "Women's Gateway" that had 360 pages in July 1996■2. It has more than 1200 pages now. Many men also visit this website but probably among websites for women this website is one of the top three (most popular) websites. I see this as the new way of networking.   I am considering how I can link the Internet to our work.   But as I have emphasized many times, if we want to make the net work, we need to have a net first.   In this point of view, I can say that the role that "Women's Gateway" will play will be so great that we cannot imagine.

■2
The URL of the homepage is http://www.women.co.jp/

Life of the Woman Entrepreneur

Editor: You have interacted with many different activities related to your work, haven't you?

Mrs. Sasaki: Yes. I am very interested in the network activities of women all over the world.   I run a nonprofit network of professional women called NAPW (Network for

Aspiring Professional Women). The big events, giving birth and taking care of a baby, that are big parts of a woman's life, affect various activities of women in any society. Women have a curve called an "M curve". The number of working women in society increases in their 20s, but they quit for various reasons such as marriage, the first child, the second child and so on.   So the number of working women decreases around the age of 30. This point is the middle part of the letter M. It becomes very hard to find working women in society.   And when they are done with their child rearing, they start working again and most of the time they work part-time. When I founded this company, I was 28, and I was worrying at the age of 28 and 29.   I made a lot of phone calls to my friends from high school and university to ask for advice.   When I called them at their work I got answers such as "she quit one month ago" or "she quit six months ago".   And then, I call them up at home and they told me, "I cannot go out at night because my husband comes back home" or "because I just gave birth, I cannot have dinner with you.   I didn't have anyone to have dinner with and to exchange information with.   I felt really isolated.

I thought that wasn't right and there must be enthusiastic women no matter what kind of environment in the world they were in, so I started to study about professional women in America. We have partners in America, so we collected information through an inter-university network, the forerunner of Internet.   We found about 50 organizations related to working women all over America.   And we studied for one year how American women worked well in society and how the system of well-functioning network organizations worked.

Consequently, NAPW was founded in July 1989, two years after the foundation of the company.   Taking American success examples into account, we published newsletters once a month and held three or four meetings a month.   That's how we started. Enthusiastic women from various fields created various possibilities by proactive discussions and exchange of information, and there are also some movements to make these possibilities come true.   I feel very proud.   NAPW also started in personal computer communication eight years ago.   The private forum (NIFTY-Serve) became a place where our members exchange information.

We also held the 1st International Conference for Women in Business in Tokyo in July 1996.   There were many conventions for women entrepreneurs in America but none in Japan.   We have had a relationship with American organizations to support women

11

entrepreneurs for eight years and developed various programs together as sister organizations. By the way, do you know how many women managers we have in Japan? According to a survey, there are 52,000 women presidents including non-entrepreneurs in Japan.   In America, however, there are 8 million women presidents.   The population ratio between Japan and America is 1:2 so the number of women presidents in America is surprising.   In addition, two out of three entrepreneurs are women.   We cannot host the large American-style conventions, but we had 532 enthusiastic women participating in the 1st International Conference for Women in Business.

We held the second conference with the theme of SOHO (small office/home office).   We will hold another conference about "Being independent" as its theme on the 16th of August this year.

I am also President of the Japanese branch of a world organization for young entrepreneurs called Young Entrepreneurs' Organization.   The conditions to be a member on this organization are to be an entrepreneur under the age of 39, to be a founder of a company, to have actual management authority, and to have over 100 million yen of annual sales.   There are about 2000 members all over the world.   The main communication method here is e-mail.

Offline and Online

Editor: You make use of online communications using the Internet and e-mail.   By the way, it is said that face-to-face communication is better than communication online. What do you think of it?

Mrs. Sasaki: I think both communication methods are complementary to each other, and I don't think on-line communication is limited.   If the minimum rules are kept, we can understand each other sufficiently by using online communication.   There are some people saying, "By relying on the online network too much, there may be a possibility that the human network will not work as well as before".   But I do not think so. I think those who are not using online communication worry about such things.   If I compare that with my 10 years of experience, there is such a tendency.   For example, we can exchange information very concretely online.   For instance, at a meeting a

person asks for advice saying, "Our company has this system but I have a question about this.　If you have a same kind of experience as I do, can you please give me some advice?"　There is no guarantee that we can have a good discussion then.　Some people cannot answer right away.　Those who could answer the question might not be there.　However, if we put that question on a BBS (Bulletin Board System), even though it didn't get any responses on that very day, there will be very appropriate answers in a few days.　Some people ask very specific questions such as "I am looking for a kindergarten around this area" or translators ask "What is the best dictionary software?" Those who have information will answer those questions.　Online networks have greater possibilities to exchange useful information far more effectively than face-to-face networking.

There were times that I had to go home earlier when I was pregnant and right after I gave birth, so I couldn't go to study meetings or meetings at night. Around 11 o'clock after their child falls asleep, or in my case I fall asleep around 10 o'clock when I get my child to asleep. So, when I get up at around three o'clock in the morning to work, I can check messages on the BBS and respond to them around 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. What makes online communication so efficient is that we can use it whenever it is convenient for us.

In "Women's Gateway", we have a BBS so we have online meetings.　We set up meetings and chatting pages (I thought just looking at websites was boring), so people in the world can tell us their opinions.　For example, we have a section for raising kids and we can see some comments like, "my child did this", "my child got sick", "does anyone know such a method?", "those with the allergy did this", and so on. If you go to a section called "Career women" we can see comments such as, "I am working at Silicon Valley.　Work here..." and "I'm working in Hong Kong.　Working woman in the society of Hong Kong cannot be compared with Japan..." and so on.　We have various messages here, and these messages lead us to some discussions.　At the beginning, we started exchanging information but it led to very interesting networking.

There are many cases that because of the sufficient information exchanges online the efficiency of the off-line networking increases.　Usually, we need to meet a person three or four times after the first face-to-face contact with the person until we really get along with the person.　However, after talking with that person thoroughly online, there is a strong possibility that we can start building very deep networking with that person on

13

the first time of meeting.

Editor: I also wrote a book with a person that I met through personal computer communication.　We can ask someone we've never met before to write a script; someone introduced me to a publisher, we went over the structure of chapters of a book with their group members, and we proofread and edited a book. We had some editorial meetings when it was necessary but since it was basically done online we could make an interesting book in a short period of time.　Only people who have done this understand this, but networking through computers has a mysterious power.

I would like to change the topic a little bit now.　In terms of meeting people, do you have any experience that was impressive?

Meeting People and Network

Mrs. Sasaki: I think the network has very dynamic power.　I've been a reporter for Asahi's "News Station" for six years.　And since last July, I have been in charge of American news program called "60 Minutes" (CBS network).　When I look back now, entering into the world of journalism, such as these TV programs, News Station and CBS, was because of networking.

This is a bit off topic, but I am really a serious person.　Because I had been a freelance interpreter since I was a university student, I had a chance to know a lot of people.　I was studying comparative culture at the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University. Not only were all lectures given in English, but also questions and answers had to be given in English.　I always sent cards for the New Year and in summer, because we exchanged our addresses even though I had the same class once or twice with them. After I graduated from university, I sent 200 or 300 hand written cards reporting my situation.　I even sent them to those I didn't really remember（laugh）.

At the age of 27, I wrote something like, "While working as a freelance interpreter, I am preparing to establish a company now" on the New Year cards and mailed them.　This guy I happen to know when I was a university student contacted me for the first time in four or five years.　He said, "I am working as an editor for a publisher. I have something needed to be translated. Can you do it? You wrote that you were a freelancer

on the card". I immediately accepted his offer.   At the time, we didn't have a fax machine, so I received an English script by mail.   I finished the translation and had some time, and had not seen him a long time, so I decided to deliver the translation myself and say hello to him.

He asked me to finish the translation with good quality so he could put it in his magazine as it was.   He read through the translation that I put my effort in and told me, "It looks like we can use it".   I instantly said, "You think so?   Thank you very much.   Please give me another job in the future".   And while we were talking to catch up, he said, "This guy who works for News Station is looking for a reporter and asked me to introduce someone to him if I knew someone good.   I think you would be really good for this".   It was totally out of the blue.   I had already decided to establish a company and had been thinking about articles of the company. However, for the future development, I said to him, "Okay.   Can you please introduce me?"   And then we finished the meeting.

Next day, a guy from the TV station contacted me and told me to visit their studio. And I said yes and went to the TV station.   I greeted the people working there and they took me to a studio and said, "This is the studio of Mr. Kume (main newscaster)".   As soon as I said, "Is that right?" all the lights were turned on and they told me to sit down on Mr. Kume's chair. I was wondering why I had to sit on the chair because I came here to see the studio but I sat there anyway.   And a producer came to me and suddenly started asking me questions like, "What kind of news did you find interesting when you were reading the newspapers?", "What would you like to convey to the public if you could do something internationally?", and so on.   I just went there to get a business card during this studio trip so it was totally unexpected.   They were rolling the cameras too.

That was not the end.   They started asking me various questions in English such as, "What kind of role would you like to play in this TV program?"   I didn't go there for an audition so I didn't have any ideas of what kind of role I wanted to play in the TV program.   I didn't remember what I said but I was answering the questions in English. They told me this afterward but apparently many people went there for official auditions.   Two weeks after that, they gave me the job. But it didn't feel right.   This is how I started working for News Station as their reporter.   My new career started from one New Year card.   I started the CBS document program due to the same kind of

situation.   I think many people try to use people, connection or network too much.   I don't say that I've never made a move without wanting something from others, but I think when I made a move with some gain in mind, I usually failed.   I cannot explain well but we can create something new because we listen to what others have to say first.

Editor: So did you become the reporter for News Station and prepare to establish the company at the same time?

Mrs. Sasaki: Yes.   Usually there would not be any doubt that I should devote myself into this job because I was chosen to be a reporter for a TV program with a high audience rating.   But, I was already so determined to establish a company so I assertively told the producer, "I am preparing to establish a company so I would like to be the reporter and to prepare my company at the same time".   Luckily, the TV station allowed me to do so.

SA-Gear as a Keyword

Editor: I'm sure that you will be making a net work so can you please tell us more about it?

Mrs. Sasaki: By combining online and offline communication, I would like to make more nets work and to keep suggesting new ways of working as a company.   Since I am a woman manager, many people have asked me, "Have you experienced difficulties in management because you are a woman?" My answer is always, I "cannot change" the fact I am a woman, so I've never had any troubles because of it.   From the moment when I concluded the cause of trouble was my gender, I would have a problem I could never solve in my life. I think there are no differences between women and men in terms of management and making a net work.

SA-Gear is a keyword to show my principle. SA is the first character of my last name, Sasaki, so SA-Gear is a network tool (Gear) of Kaori Sasaki. The first keyword of the tool is "Sharing".   In more detail, it is to share our experiences with others.   In order for the network to function well, it is necessary to interact with others well, as I have emphasized previously.   To do so, it is necessary to share.   So what does sharing mean? Sharing in Japanese is a concept that is used quite often in English-speaking

areas.   It means everyone shares their emotional feelings, opinions, and experiences with others.   A network cannot be created by the people who want to keep everything for themselves or who try to "take advantage of others".

The second keyword is "Aspiring". This means to improve. One of the goals in networking is "to improve each other through enlightening each other". It is necessary for everyone who participates in the network to understand this keyword. When someone finds a problem or experiences an incident that makes them feel bad, we give them suggestions in order to solve these problems. Criticizing them doesn't solve anything.   Apparently, and it is a pity, but there is a stronger tendency for networks of women than those of men not to work because they try to drag down each other and say bad things about each other. It is difficult for organizations consisting of women to keep going, and the fact that mass media came to NAPW and asked "What is the secret for your eight years of survival?" proves how difficult it is.   As long as we have an attitude to aspire, a network functions.   But it is very difficult to do.

The third keyword is "Give and given".   Give and Take is a commonly used phrase, but I don't have "take" in my dictionary. I say *give* and *given*. . In order for a network to function, it is important for us to give them information from us, give energy to them, and give something to them before they do when we meet someone.   And then for the first time we will have a chance to be given something from others.   This keyword is necessary especially if we want to deal with people internationally.

I have talked about only America but I have traveled to about 30 countries so far. Since I receive the most information from America, my stories are always centered on America.   When I talk to Americans, what they don't like most is delegations from Japan.   These over-middle-aged men come to America saying, "Please teach us something." and all they say are "Oh, that's great" and "Thank you very much".   And they return to Japan.   And Americans don't know why they came to America.   I also think the attitude of the delegations is so rude.   They take the time and knowledge from wherever they visit for free.   I think it is okay if they pay.   If these Japanese delegations ask people where they visit to speak one hour and pay a few hundred thousand yen, these people will teach them whatever they can teach because it is business.   But if these delegations go to America to observe what they are doing in America, they should ask something like "We have to deal with what you've just told us about too. Can you tell us why you did that?"   And start a discussion with them to

share information.　Everyone would benefit and learn.　If the delegations don't give information, then they should pay.

I also have a big question about the reason why Japanese people try to "join" a network. There are many people who think they can benefit, if they join some club, some study meeting, or some network.　I think there are too many people who don't have any intention to give information.　We call these people who don't give any information but only read on a BBS read only members (ROM).　Unfortunately we cannot call them members of the network.　We can learn from the teachers at school but the network is not such a place.　Even in the meetings of entrepreneurs and exchange groups of different business fields, they are not real networks without the spirit of give and given.

The fourth keyword is "Enjoying".　Most of the keywords so far are in the progressive form, aren't they? This is also important. Networking is something to enjoy.　It doesn't matter what role you are playing, maybe you're a wife, maybe a mother, maybe a husband, maybe a president, or maybe a student, the ability to absorb news skills cannot be very high if we cannot enjoy it. We all have many experiences. But when we are with a boyfriend or girlfriend that we really like, we remember almost everything the other was talking about and can keep talking about various things.　But when we listen to people we don't like, we don't really remember anything.　When we read boring books, we cannot learn anything from them.　I don't think we can do things well, if we don't find them interesting or cannot enjoy them.

This is same in networking.　If we're sitting somewhere that is not enjoyable while thinking they may give me some useful information, we shouldn't do that because simply it is a waste of time.　Enjoying is very necessary.　I heard that there was a manager of an American big company who wore a Snoopy watch.　Every time he looked at the watch, he could see the words, "Are you happy?" on the face of the watch. During very intensive meetings or a very important decision-making process, he asked himself, "Do I enjoy this situation I am in?". We should be working for a job we could smile at, when we looked at the watch.

The fifth keyword is "Action Taking". There is a big difference between taking an action or standing at the same place and thinking. I started interpretation as a part-time job at the age of 15 and since then I have never been given money from my parents. I paid to go to high school, university and night school. It is partly because my family was not

18

wealthy, but also it is related to my principle that nothing can happen unless I take action. If I had stopped and kept thinking about establishing a company because I did not study management theory, I did not have any elder staff to give me advice, and did not have a well-established business plan, I would not be who I am now. I am not too sure if it is good but there are many situations where it is important to solve problems while we are taking action, I think. Whether or not our life goes well depends on how many good people we have met and how many good experiences we have had. We cannot meet good people or accumulate good experiences if we have few opportunities to meet and few experiences. Therefore, Action Taking is the keyword.

The last keyword is "Responsibility". In an English-Japanese dictionary, it says "Sekinin". It consists of the words "to blame" and "to entrust". It sounds very serious, but please note the English characters. It consists of two words, "response" and "ability". Response means to react and ability means the physical or mental power or skills to do something. "Seki-nin" makes us feel that we should be prepared for some serious punishment when something goes wrong. But in a sense of English, all we need is an ability to respond to or deal with it when something happens. I think that is the real meaning of responsibility. If we can think in a more positive way, such as that we do not have to commit *seppuku* (a form of suicide) but we just have to be able to deal with it, we can make various mistakes while we are living. We can meet many people and learn from them and if we encounter problems we just do our best to solve them. Then we will know that we have a responsible attitude.

Editor: "SA-Gear" is a golden rule that can be applied to any types of networking such as entrepreneurs, study groups of university or society, relationships among family members and between boyfriends and girlfriends, and relationships among boss, subordinates and peers.

Mrs. Sasaki: Network is an English word but we have a saying in Japan: "Output of the counsel of three guys comes wisdom", so by gathering we can increase our wisdom. This is the greatest benefit of a network. People are connected and work together.

Another thing is that we can improve ourselves by interacting with others. When I think something should be A but someone else says B, we can create not only AB but also we start realizing "A and A". This is a very interesting point when we are networking. I am not a person who learns from reading books but I do learn from others.

19

By meeting other people and talking with them, my brain cells absorb energy from them and I start thinking about various things. UNICUL is a global human network now.

[From Editors]

SA-Gear (President Sasaki's principle of network) is an action guideline of UNICUL International Inc. in a sense. However, I often think that many companies might have forgotten about the principle. Probably that is why there are surprisingly many nets that are not working. SA-Gear that consists of the keywords, Sharing, Aspiring, Give and Given, Enjoying, Action Taking, Responsibility are requirements to "make a net work". None of them should be left out, but even though we have all the keywords a network does not just start functioning suddenly. "Detailed" and "gentle" attitudes might be requirements. If so, I also think that female entrepreneurs are better suited to make a net work.

In this interview, we talked about not only face-to-face communication but also the essence of online communication through communication networks. There is a fact that various information beyond management information is conveyed among people through an online network and new business is developed when that information is connected with management information. This fact is not very well-recognized. It seems very important to think about the meaning of our lives as we live in sucha   society.

I recently received an email from Mrs. Sasaki. She wrote, "I think going public is an option". It was very naturally said, but I felt power in it. It is the power conveyed because it is online communication.

I think this interview is a good material to learn from not only for those who want to be entrepreneurs but also those who are trying to establish their own identity as entrepreneurs. She did not really talk about the business structure, management strategies, or finances, but what is it that makes me think that "this company is extraordinary"? When the interview ended, I knew I wanted to watch UNICUL International Inc. from now on.