

> **“At LIXIL, the focus is on helping employees maximize their potential. Our managers are also equipped to embrace diversity and ensure stretch assignments and even online learning options, are on hand to help employees grow and develop.”**

Toshie Takahashi

2019 – Present:

Leader, Brand & Commercial Marketing, Vietnam LWT APAC





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2016 – 2019

Director, Global Brand Management,
LIXIL HQ Marketing

2015 – 2016

Head of Global Brand Office,
Public Affairs LIXIL

2006 – 2013

Area Marketing Officer/
Head of Corporate Communications Philips

– 2005

Marketing Manager Microsoft

LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING. WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO JOIN LIXIL?

When I joined LIXIL over a decade ago, my entire career so far had been with foreign companies, which often tends to be run differently and have a different culture than Japanese corporations. I wanted the challenge and to gain new experience working in the headquarters (HQ) rather than being part of the APAC region for an American company, for example. And I was curious to see if my preconception around domestic companies was true.

When I joined, LIXIL had just been formed a mere two years prior, I finally had the opportunity I was looking for. I was able to nurture a brand, while anchoring it in Japanese culture, belief and values; but doing it so in a way that made it relevant to consumers around the world. This was a perfect “inside-out” situation, rather than the “outside-in” situation.

From that point on, with the acquisition of GROHE and American Standard, we've accelerated our transformation into a truly global company - which happens to be headquartered in Japan. Our legacy, innovations, portfolio, and advanced technologies are now available through multiple brands across the world.

CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR CAREER JOURNEY IN LIXIL?

I made a pivotal decision to join LIXIL in 2013, after about 20 years of work experience with global brands that were not originating from Japan. While nervous about stepping into my first role within a Japanese company - which back then was still quite domestic focused, I was excited to begin my career at the LIXIL headquarters in Marketing. I later transitioned to a Public Affairs position, where I was responsible for overseeing the LIXIL brand. In 2019, I made my most recent move. I relocated to Vietnam with a primary objective of strengthening the brand's presence in the market. Since then, I have been leading our Water Technology brands in Vietnam as Marketing Leader, overseeing branding for our well-recognized brands GROHE, American Standard, and INAX. My second mission is to expand the INAX business across the entire APAC region.



WHAT WERE THE EARLY STAGES OF YOUR CAREER LIKE?

LIXIL was born in 2011 through the merger of five of Japan's most successful building materials and housing companies. When I first joined LIXIL in 2013, the brand “LIXIL” was at its early stages of growth and awareness - people knew us by our consumer brands, such as INAX or Tostem.

Back then, I still remember doing a simple Google search for LIXIL and realising there was little information on our brand’s websites on who we were, what we did, and how big a company we were.

When I joined, my mission was simple but all-encompassing: build up brand awareness. So, one of my very first few tasks was to ensure visibility and create a brand presence online via our LIXIL.com website. That easily ranks as one of my key achievements here at LIXIL, establishing our fundamental communicator of the corporate brand.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A DUAL IN-MARKET AND REGIONAL ROLE, HOW IS THE COLLABORATION AND TEAM DYNAMIC LIKE ACROSS MARKETS?

LIXIL is a great employer and opportunities are on hand when you have the skillset or capability. Our managers are willing to explore stretch assignments to extend an employee’s potential. There are several programs and even online learning options, focused on helping employees grow and develop.

I take great pride in my dual role within LIXIL – on a local market level as well as a regional one. I find it very enriching to be able to bridge the regional initiatives with our local market ones by creating an understanding of the requirements and objectives on both sides of the fence.

I must say, in my roles within LIXIL HQ, it was extremely diverse in terms of collaborating with global colleagues on a daily basis. I used to work with a team that had a broad spectrum of members who were based worldwide, from New Jersey to Tokoname. I also had team members from diverse nationalities. This ensures we were able to learn and stand out as a result of the diverse perspectives and ways of doing things.

Now that I’m based out of a local market like Vietnam, most of my colleagues are from Vietnam. Diversity is thankfully not just about nationality. Inclusion for everyone is our goal and a priority. We have an open and diverse culture, and it permeates as the company introduces policies and practices that benefit all, including working moms such as myself.

We see our fair share of working moms and dads here within our Vietnam team. It’s quite heartening to see a number of parents being comfortable enough to bring their kids to the office on the instances where it is necessary, like an unexpected call back to the office during the weekend. I am fortunate to have bosses, colleagues and a company that fully supports my role as a working mother, providing me with the flexibility to tend to my daughter’s needs without compromising my work. It’s great to see how inclusive and supportive team here is towards working parents.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE A TIME WHERE YOU FELT MOTIVATED OR INSPIRED AT LIXIL?

On a personal level, my circumstances in relocating to Vietnam presented many challenges. Of which, the one most significant was my decision to relocate to Vietnam for the role while my spouse remains in Japan. It was extremely tough for me, having to relocate with my then five-year-old daughter. However, HR had the agility to look into my situation and made the necessary changes to accommodate my circumstances. LIXIL has the flexibility and makes changes to help employees when needed.

Knowing that I have the ability to pave the way and set the precedent for other employees gives me great motivation to keep working with HR to improve our policies. Knowing that I can help the next LIXIL employee who is looking to make a similar career decision has been rewarding.





WHAT MAKES WORKING AT LIXIL ENGAGING, EXCITING AND ENERGISING?

The first reason is our diverse portfolio of products and brands. Within my 10 years at LIXIL, we have developed the unique ability to stake claim to the fact that 1 billion people are using our products everyday across the globe. That is something I'm extremely proud of and pleased to be able to communicate to the world.

I worked on building a Japanese brand outside Japan, and showcasing how our global consumer brands make an impact and difference to so many lives. I really see how as a company, we are truly making better homes and lives, a reality for everyone, everyday.

A second reason is how LIXIL is implementing positive changes to its policies to be more inclusive on many aspects of diversity. I know many other companies have this claim but the steady implementation of policy reforms over the past decade is testimonial to that. We're able to answer the needs of employees in over 150 countries, and that is certainly not easy.

The current progress is the result of employees who showed a lot of courage in persistently proposing changes for the better and caring for their colleagues. I think it reflects well on our brand too. While our journey isn't perfect, I take great pride in knowing that the employees of LIXIL work hard to create a great environment to work.

On top of my own example, I see many others benefitting from changes. For example, we had colleagues in Germany talking about tandem work and experimenting with it at a managerial level. We also had D&I training workshops led by managers this year. Our managers are taking charge and ownership, and making sure D&I is not just hearsay, but there are actual actions and results.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING A CAREER AT LIXIL?

It's important to strive for greater things in your career. Focus on developing the ability to be resilient so that you are ready to take full advantage of opportunities that come your way, no matter how challenging the circumstances might be.

Have an open mind towards changes and circumstances as they may present you opportunities to grow and further your career. But most importantly, be proactive and chase your opportunities for yourself instead of waiting for them to drop in your lap.

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