

Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Limited



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"Corporate License" Case Study:

Coca-Cola Japan Co., Ltd., supports global career advancement by improving employees' English proficiency

Coca-Cola is one of the most beloved beverage manufacturers around the world. The company was sold in Japan during the Taisho era, and the Japan branch office was established in 1957. At Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Ltd. (CCJC), communication with non-Japanese speakers occurs on a daily basis, requiring employees to have professional English language proficiency especially if one wants to leave Japan and build a career globally.

In addition, in 2021, the organization experienced a global change when Japan and South Korea became one organization (operating unit) which made English more and more important in business. CCJC has then decided to adopt goFLUENT's "Corporate License" to improve the English proficiency of its employees and provide them with high-quality learning opportunities.

As a response, "Corporate License" was introduced to Mr. Patrick Jordan, VP of Human Resources, Japan & South Korea Operating Unit, CCJC, and to Mr. Hisashi Tokunaga, HR Strategic Business Partner, Japan & South Korea Operating Unit, CCJC. We asked them about the overview of the training and product use as well as future developments and expectations.

Read the report below.

The organization was integrated in Japan and South Korea in 2021, and the need for English proficiency increased.

Please tell us about your policy on human resource development.

Patrick Jordan (Mr. Jordan): *We're a beverage manufacturer operating globally, and we're trying to create a brand that is loved all over the world. Our purpose is to "Refresh the World. Make a Difference". We aim not only to provide delicious beverages, but also to craft the brands and choice of drinks that people love, to refresh them in body and spirit, and these are done in ways that create a more sustainable business and better shared future that makes a difference in people's lives, communities, and our planet. Not only do we aim to succeed in business, but we also want to return the profits we earn through business to the world and to the people. Human resources are very important as the foundation for future growth, and we have set the following four guidelines:*



1. Supporting growth and expanding potential
2. Supporting career plan realization
3. Addressing Diversity & Inclusion
4. Bringing great experiences through services

What are your projects on human resource development?

Mr. Jordan: *For example, there is training for leadership development. Specifically, you'll schedule a week in Atlanta to learn how to lead your business, manage yourself, and be mentally involved and motivated. We're particularly focusing on developing leaders, and we have conducted similar programs in Japan and South Korea. However, now that it's difficult to conduct on-the-job training due to COVID-19, we are looking for a new way of training.*



Tell us more about your employee's career.

Mr. Hisashi Tokunaga (hereinafter referred to as Mr. Tokunaga): *At The Coca-Cola Company, based on the policy that "employees will take ownership for career development", we have put in place tools and opportunities for our employees to realize their own career plan. All open positions except senior leadership roles are open to them, and usually, employees from all over the world apply for these positions. People managers have monthly or weekly 1-on-1 meetings with their team members, not only to discuss business progress and ways to achieve business results, but also to talk about career plans and paths.*

How is English training important in that aspect?

Mr. Jordan: *English proficiency is necessary for us to achieve the four guidelines mentioned above. Coca-Cola, including Japan, is expanding its business globally which makes English essential for the employees of Japanese corporations to be able to play an active role overseas. Moreover, looking at my daily work, there are many opportunities to collaborate with employees all over the world, and in 2021, Japan and South Korea began to operate as one organization. It is now common that there are non-Japanese bosses on the same team and there are also bosses and colleagues from South Korea, and with this, English has become even more important to achieve more seamless communication.*

goFLUENT as an English learning partner

Your company has had a considerable need for English proficiency. What does the training system for this look like?

Mr. Tokunaga: *In the past, there have already been requests for English training. However, before, training programs were not set up company-wide, and individual departments paid the training costs from their respective department budgets. As I mentioned, the integration of Japanese and Korean organizations has increased the opportunities for all employees to use English, and we have considered introducing an English training program that can be provided within the entire company.*

Among the many learning platforms, goFLUENT's "Corporate License" has been introduced. What is the reason for this?

Mr. Tokunaga: *Before, when I was considering training because there were needs and requests for English learning programs in my client groups as HR Business Partner, I received a call from goFLUENT. Actually, I had the opportunity to get to know goFLUENT in the company I used to work for where I saw significant improvement in the English proficiency of the employees. This time, we talked again and found that they have a wealth of content related to Business English and an easy-to-use learning system. At first, it was only used in some departments that I was in charge of, but as Japan and South Korea became one organization, it expanded across the company.*

At CCJC, it's very important to be able to showcase your experience and abilities in English to build your career. Therefore, it's necessary to improve English proficiency according to each person's needs and abilities. I thought goFLUENT would make it possible for us. Also, since goFLUENT had a good understanding of our needs, we decided to introduce goFLUENT to our employees and provide them with a better English education and learning environment. I wanted goFLUENT to be a partner in English training for us.

Through blended learning, each employee, especially those who communicate frequently using English, can have a dedicated learning consultant. They can also receive learning advice and schedule management support which is highly useful.

How do you select your learners?

Mr. Tokunaga: *Basically, we have a candidacy system. We prioritized employees who are well motivated and keen to learn English by themselves. In addition, the company may call out to employees who are extremely active and want to be assigned international roles. Each study will proceed individually, and we don't force anything from the company side. We focus on individual efforts.*

We heard that you are also learning with goFLUENT.

Mr. Tokunaga: *Yes. I find it very easy to use because I can receive training according to my needs. With the online learning environment, it is very effective for me that I can receive advice not only through calls but also through chat-function with written words, sentences, etc.*

What kind of learning do you expect from your employees?

Mr. Tokunaga: *Most employees can generally understand everyday conversations and emails in English. However, there are only a limited number of employees who can freely use English in various work situations. For example, someone may need to learn how to jump into the big global meeting. In goFLUENT's training, you can receive practical training such as how to stand out, what we should say first to jump in, etc. We can also leverage goFLUENT's language training materials for this kind of specific need to use English. In the future, especially for Japanese people who will work globally, they will be able to develop their English skills as well. Although it has just been introduced, I have already received positive feedback from non-Japanese speakers that "Mr. XX's English ability has improved", and with that, I've realized the effectiveness of the training even more.*



Learner's Voice

Mr. Tokunaga, who is learning English for business, and two employees, who are actually studying with goFLUENT, were interviewed for this section. Here, as a special topic, we will deliver the purpose and goals of the training and some of its results and impact.



Mr. Shu Imanishi

First of all, please briefly tell us what you do in your current job role.

IMX, the marketing department, oversees the department that develops and executes consumer experiences and communication campaigns for each brand and product such as branding design, digital platform, media and promotion planning, content production, and marketing assets.

How's your English learning so far?

I have no experience in studying abroad or being assigned overseas, so I took individual English language lessons. The great thing is that I was learning while doing my daily work.

Can you tell us about your impressions of actually learning with goFLUENT?

I felt that the content for users was very substantial. Articles and videos in various fields, not limited to my industry, are readily available as learning materials. There are various difficulty settings, creating an environment that makes it easy for individuals to engage in learning.

How do you devote your learning time?

Currently, it's not possible to constantly spend time studying due to the schedule and workload on weekdays, but we have a system called Premium Friday, and after 15:30 on Friday, we can use our free time however we want, so I take my lessons during that time.

Why did you try to improve your English in the first place?

In recent years, collaborative projects and communication with related sections around the world have increased rapidly, and English is used for meetings, emails, document preparation, etc. On the other hand, I had no experience in studying abroad or being assigned overseas, so I felt that my English ability was limited. In particular, I felt the challenge of being able to communicate sufficiently at meetings and presentations and communicating my thoughts and opinions more effectively.

How did the training impact your work?

Yes. I feel that I'm now able to use more appropriate phrases and expressions in my daily communication.

Korean Learner

First of all, please briefly tell us what you do in your current job role.

We perform financial and customer financial analysis.

How's your English learning so far?

I have studied English at school and have also traveled to Canada as an exchange student. After that, I'm now learning more deeply through my daily work.

Can you tell us about your impressions of using goFLUENT?

In addition to learning new expressions, I was also able to identify the mistakes I usually make. Frequently used materials include video clips, news articles, and vocabulary. There are teaching materials for various business situations which are very useful. I also like the fact that if you have any questions about the teaching materials, you can ask your trainer in a 1-on-1 discussion format. I also took a writing lesson wherein I copied and pasted my email to get feedback from my trainer.

How do you allocate your study time?

I can leave the office after 15:00 on Fridays, so I devote that time to studying. I usually have 1-on-1 training, and I'm required to do my homework every time, so I try to finish it before the next lesson. By working on my homework, I consciously spend more time learning English.

Why did you try to improve your English in the first place?

I'm the only Korean in the team, and it's inevitable that I use English when meeting with team members. I also have the opportunity to give presentations in English to the finance team leader.

Did you experience any changes or effects in your work?

When you decide to give a presentation at work, you can take a 1-on-1 class where you can prepare for that presentation. In the session, you will be able to correct the mistakes in expressions, so you can go to the actual presentation with more confidence.

Aiming to develop talents who are active in major global positions

Please tell us about your future prospects for employee development, including improving your employees' English proficiency.

Mr. Tokunaga: CCJC has a 70:20:10 model for learning and development. This means that 70% of learning would be from Experience (learning gained through On-The-Job experience), 20% means Exposure (Knowledge built through interaction with others such as coaching, feedback and mentoring), and 10% means Education (formal training). English training can be regarded as belonging to the 10% area. But if you can improve your English skills, the quality and quantity of Experience and Exposure will also increase dramatically. With that, English proficiency is one of the foundations of skills development in business and is extremely important. While receiving advice from goFLUENT, we will first aim to improve our company-wide English proficiency.

Mr. Jordan: The business itself is now changing. Of course, the way of training must be changed as well, but the importance of English proficiency doesn't change especially when Japanese employees are demonstrating global leadership. It has become absolutely necessary.

Mr. Tokunaga: In addition to what we have talked about focusing on internal needs, an English training platform would be valuable for external hiring. I assume some of the people who are currently working at other companies may want to build a career at Coca-Cola (Japan) Company, Ltd., but we experienced some cases where people are worried about their English ability and are reluctant to apply. I can communicate with external candidates such as "Not all of us can speak English, and even after joining the company, you can improve your English proficiency through the goFLUENT program." We don't evaluate capability, ability, potential, etc. only by being proficient in English. If you would like to take on the challenge, please feel free to contact us. The door is wide open for motivated people.



Finally, what are your expectations for employees of the Japanese corporation?

Mr. Tokunaga: *There are many excellent employees here in Japan. One of our missions is to develop as many employees as possible who are ready to take major global positions.*

Mr. Jordan: *Each country and region has its own characteristics, so there are things that Japanese people can understand and do better than others. The global success of Japanese people will increase the diversity of the Coca-Cola Company. I don't want everyone to aim for the world, but I want to provide equal opportunities for everyone. I want employees who aim for the world to aim for the world. English proficiency is essential to achieve that, and I'm convinced that the partnership with goFLUENT is very important.*



Summary

We have delivered a language training program sample from Coca-Cola Japan Co., Ltd. It seems that the fact that each employee can select and schedule a learning program at their own pace matches the company's working style. The existence of learning consultants who support each employee's learning also played a major role in improving English proficiency within the company.

goFLUENT intends to strongly support Coca-Cola Japan Co., Ltd. as a partner for English language learning.

About

goFLUENT is an award-winning digital language learning solution present in 150 countries around the world. Accelerate your language learning by combining technology, content, and human interaction to provide hyper-personalized solutions available on any device, anywhere, and anytime. Today, HR leaders from more than 1,000 global companies in more than 100 countries rely on goFLUENT's solutions to gain confidence, drive career growth and establish a more inclusive global culture.

You can check our client case studies here: <https://www.gofluent.com/us-en/client-stories>

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