CSR Communication Strategies

Approach to CSR Communication

The Ajinomoto Group believes that its CSR activities improve through effective communication with society. The company’s stakeholder dialogues are at the center of the group’s CSR management, which functions as "C" in the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. Additionally, the group will further promote other activities that engage with society.

Based on opinions obtained from annual stakeholder dialogues and survey findings, the group acknowledges that its corporate activities are not being fully communicated. In response, efforts are being undertaken to more effectively communicate to stakeholders, particularly the public at large, the group’s approach to CSR in business activities and results of specific initiatives in the pursuit of its ideal, “Eat Well, Live Well.”

Engaging with society through CSR communication

The Ajinomoto Group CSR Communication Plan and Initiatives

1. The Ajinomoto Group will develop corporate advertising campaigns that convey the Ajinomoto Group Vision, approach to business activities, and specific initiatives in relation to the challenges it has designated for humankind in the 21st century.
2. The Ajinomoto Group has created the following message and artwork to express its approach to solving the challenges for humankind in the 21st century through business activities.

![Ajinomoto Group's message and artwork](image)

3. Corporate communication materials of the Ajinomoto Group should be created according to the guidelines below in response to the expectations of the public and specialists, with the aim to gain the understanding of stakeholders, respond to their hopes, and attract new customers.

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<tr>
<th>Corporate communications material to the public should:</th>
<th>Corporate communications material to specialists should:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Convey new information in a pleasant, lively manner</td>
<td>1. Express the drive to realize new possibilities and business prospects in the future</td>
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<td>2. Have a visual and thematic consistency when messages are displayed in public spaces</td>
<td>2. Focus on projects and technologies</td>
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<td>3. Express the group’s commitment to wellness in everyday lives</td>
<td>3. Convey a commitment to contribute to society</td>
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On September 7, 2010, a symposium entitled "The Significance of Risk Communication in Food and Science" was held at the University of Tokyo's Research Center for Food Safety. The special lectures began with a talk on advanced risk communication initiatives related to food in Europe by Irene van Geest-Jacobs, the former deputy director of communications at the European Food Safety Authority. It was followed by a lecture by Sue Hartley, a professor at the University of Sussex, who discussed plant evolution and its historical and future relationship with human beings. Based on her 2010 Christmas Lectures for the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the talk also touched on current improvements in the cultivation of edible plants.

The lectures were followed by a lively panel discussion in which participants exchanged viewpoints on food safety.

Symposium on food safety

The panel discussion

Professor Sue Hartley
Irene Van Geest-Jacobs

Face to Face with Patients

AJINOMOTO PHARMACEUTICALS CO., LTD. is engaged in the research and development as well as production and sale of specialized pharmaceutical products for treating the liver, kidneys, and digestive organs, with a focus on pursuing core technologies mainly based on amino acids. As pharmaceuticals are delivered directly to hospitals and other medical institutions, there are few opportunities for company employees to communicate with the patients that use them.

To address this, AJINOMOTO PHARMACEUTICALS CO., LTD. took an opportunity to interact with patients suffering from intractable diseases at the Second Walk and Run Festival.

Second Walk and Run Festival held in 2010

With support from the Ajinomoto Group as a special sponsor, the Walk and Run Festival was held at the AJINOMOTO STADIUM on September 11, 2010. In response to an unexpected heat wave, extensive medical facilities were set up to handle cases of heat stroke or other potential problems during sports activities. Despite the heat, many people enjoyed mingling on the field, in the stadium concourse, and inside the facilities.
First held in 2009, the Walk and Run Festival aims to bring together, engage and invigorate people with and without intractable diseases or disabilities through exercise. The second festival in 2010 attracted approximately 4,000 visitors and featured a new program of activities. They included a walking clinic and a running clinic open to people with or without disabilities, physical health and fitness checks, and a five-hour running race with newly established rules.

Other festival events were designed to enable participants to experience living with disabilities. For example, audio ping-pong required players to wear an eye mask and rely only on the sound of the bouncing ball during a game. A lecture for escort runners was held to give participants an opportunity to guide visually impaired marathon runners. The program also featured other special activities such as walking and running in pairs while holding a short rope, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair skiing using a Wii game console, and cycling on bicycles pedaled with the hands.

Festival participants were impressed with the events, with one remarking: "Whether people had a disability or not, there was simply no barrier and everyone naturally enjoyed the day together." Other comments included: "I had a good opportunity to consider the feelings of people who use wheelchairs," and "This event made me interested in sports."

The next Walk and Run Festival is scheduled for September 25, 2011 under the theme of working with each other.

Inflammatory bowel disease patients tour AJINOMOTO PHARMACEUTICALS CO., LTD. Fukushima Plant

On November 19, 2010, AJINOMOTO PHARMACEUTICALS CO., LTD. Fukushima Plant was visited by 19 members of the IBD Network, an organization for people with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The participants came from all over Japan, spanning Iwate Prefecture in the north part of the country to Nagasaki Prefecture in the south, and they observed the production of ELENTAL®, an elemental diet for IBD patients.

During the tour, the plant’s employees provided explanations while demonstrating the production processes of ELENTAL®. In a discussion with employees held after the tour, patients conveyed their opinions and impressions of the product, as well as various viewpoints of their families.

At a later date, the plant’s manager received a letter from one of the visitors. The letter read: "I returned to health after I started to take ELENTAL®, and I believe that I can maintain my health with its continued use. I would like to thank everyone at the plant for their work, which directly relates to the health of people with inflammatory bowel disease." When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck the region where the Fukushima Plant is located, employees found inspiration in the letter as they worked side by side toward disaster recovery.

1. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is an intractable disease characterized by inflammation and ulceration of the mucosa in the bowels. Symptoms include abdominal pain and diarrhea. Its cause is unclear.
Listening to Feedback from Society (Stakeholder Dialogues)

Stakeholder Dialogues for Advancing CSR

The Ajinomoto Group considers the stakeholder dialogues as an important activity within its CSR initiatives. Dialogue with members of society enables the group to verify that its efforts are meeting society’s demands. The stakeholder dialogues correspond to the C in the PDCA cycle, and are regarded by the Ajinomoto Group as a valuable contribution to CSR management.

Stakeholder Dialogue in Fiscal 2010

Overview of the session

Date: November 1, 2010
Venue: The Ajinomoto Group Takanawa Training Center
Participants: 12 people comprising 7 stakeholders and 5 executives of Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

Note: Names and titles were correct at the time of the dialogues.

Yoko Ishikura  
Professor, International Business Strategy  
Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy  
Hitotsubashi University

Kouyuu Furusawa  
Professor, Faculty of Economics  
Kokugakuin University

Daishiro Kyushin  
Deputy Consultant, Nishikaze Office  
Member of the Nippon Association of Consumer Specialists

Riichiro Oda  
President, Change Agent Inc.

Makoto Teranaka  
Secretary General, Amnesty International Japan

Satoko Ito  
Chief Program Officer, Japan Center for International Exchange

Masami Kojima  
Senior Staff Writer, Living and Domestic News Department, Tokyo Office, The Mainichi Newspaper

Five executives of Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

Osamu Tosaka  
Member of the Board & Corporate Executive Deputy President

Keiichi Yokoyama  
Member of the Board & Corporate Senior Vice President

Kiyoshi Miwa  
Member of the Board & Corporate Senior Vice President

Tomoya Yoshizumi  
Member of the Board & Corporate Vice President

Tamotsu Iwamoto  
Member of the Board & Corporate Vice President
Topics of discussion

1. Expectations for the activities of the Ajinomoto Group in the context of its aim to be a group of companies that contributes to human health globally
2. The need for the Ajinomoto Group to procure and use food resources sustainably over the long term

Background for formulating the topics of discussion

In 2009, the Ajinomoto Group designated global sustainability, food resources, and healthy living as three challenges that humanity faces in the 21st century. In an effort to find solutions to these social issues, workshops were held for employees to generate discussions on initiatives that the group could pursue. The resulting ideas were shared with stakeholders, who, in turn, offered opinions from the perspective of their respective fields of expertise on what activities were required by the group to address the social challenges.

As the Ajinomoto Group formulated its FY2011–2013 Medium-Term Management Plan, the management recognized stakeholders' opinions as representing the views of society, and is actively sharing them with employees while focusing on creating and enhancing CSR management systems.

Session proceedings

Prior to the discussions, presentations were given by two stakeholders who specialize in fields related to the topics. At their conclusion, participants were organized into two discussion groups. After discussing each topic, each of the groups shared the opinions they had covered with all of the participants in the session.

Topic 1: Expectations for the activities of the Ajinomoto Group in the context of its aim to be a group of companies that contributes to human health globally

A presentation given by Yoko Ishikura focused on three points: the importance of doing fieldwork to understand local conditions; the need to rapidly respond to global shifts based on a comprehensive view of social issues and a full grasp of international trends; and the observation that corporations are not cooperating effectively with people who are knowledgeable about local conditions, such as members of NGOs and international organizations.

Each group began discussions after the presentation. Some of the key ideas that arose are presented below.

Main opinions expressed by the two discussion groups

- The Ajinomoto Group should increase its presence within major frameworks designed to maintain global health.
- Thorough knowledge of a local area to conduct business is essential.
- The company's upper management should not limit its involvement to business sites, but also participate in international discussions to gain a better understanding of global trends.
- The Ajinomoto Group should increase cooperation with NGOs and international organizations.
- As farmers around the world live in poverty, global food companies have begun strengthening support for such farmers and their communities in response.
- As the Japanese market is highly developed in meeting demands related to the aging of society, the group will be able to contribute to societies over the world if it can identify and implement solutions that address such issues.
- The Ajinomoto Group should declare a firm commitment to pursue initiatives that can contribute to solving social problems highly relevant to its operations.
- The group should search for ways to help countries and regions that are seriously affected by hunger due to poverty.
- Young people seek employment that is beneficial to society. It is therefore crucial for the group to promote its socially conscious business activities in order to attract motivated employees.
- To encourage employees and consumers to read through the Ajinomoto Group CSR Report entirely, the group should take the reader's perspective. Content should be tailored to show the future outlook, match reader interests, and inspire employees.
The presentation given by Kouyuu Furusawa also examined three issues: whether food production can keep pace with the world population, which is forecast to exceed 9 billion people in 2050; the complexity and difficulty of understanding issues related to food resources without taking a comprehensive view of the interrelatedness of particular circumstances; and the need to identify initiatives to be taken by countries, local communities, and corporations to address food resource issues.

Following the presentation, both groups engaged in discussions that went beyond company-level issues to include broader opinions. Some of them are listed below.

Main opinions expressed by the two discussion groups

- The Ajinomoto Group must, first and foremost, determine whether any problems exist at sites where food resources are procured, clarify the roles and responsibilities of national governments, local communities and industries, and respond accordingly by implementing appropriate measures.
- When the group provides support to help improve the productivity of traditional farming, measures should be taken to ensure that changes do not result in environmental damage or problems related to labor, human rights, health and safety.
- In the most impoverished countries, the group should consider methods for raising land productivity that employs the abundant workers available, rather than adopting standards of labor productivity adopted in advanced economies.
- As the Ajinomoto Group employs amino acid fermentation technologies that use resources differently from traditional organic methods, the group's approach could be one solution for food resource problems.
- The group can control resources if it owns agricultural land. When that is not the case, it must oversee suppliers using procurement standards.
- The Ajinomoto group must give consideration to social issues such as forced labor and health care in relation to the supply chain.
- Consumer education is essential to address the issue of significant food waste.

After the discussions

This session of the stakeholder dialogues covered far-reaching issues and produced a wide range of opinions from participants. While it is not possible to sum them up under a single theme, some of the main points raised are listed as follows:

- As the Ajinomoto Group expands its business globally, it should differentiate between global issues that cannot be solved without the participation of the international community, such as climate change and nuclear proliferation, and universal issues that can be handled feasibly at the local level, such as securing resources and protecting biodiversity.
- The group must understand societal issues in their entirety, identify the causes, and put forward solutions from a medium- to long-term perspective.
- Soil, water and nutrients are vital for food resources. It is therefore necessary for the Ajinomoto Group, as a global company, to clarify its stance on issues related to these matters.
- Close collaboration with NGOs to more quickly and efficiently expand business in developing countries is essential.
- While the group’s initiatives may be positive, they will not be recognized if they are not effectively promoted to the public.

Following the stakeholder dialogues, the opinions of stakeholders were shared in a meeting with managers and members of each of the company’s divisions. As the FY2011–2013 Medium-Term Management Plan were in the process of being formulated at the time, the results of the stakeholder dialogues provided an opportunity to re-examine what kind of approach the Ajinomoto Group should take toward the three challenges related to global sustainability, food resources, and healthy living, as well as how it should communicate its initiatives to society.
Communicating with Society

The Group's Approach to Advertising

The Ajinomoto Group recognizes that previous efforts to publicize its numerous CSR initiatives have been insufficient. Taking advantage of the occasion of the group's 100th anniversary, in fiscal 2009 the group began corporate advertising on television to broaden public awareness of its socially responsible activities. In fiscal 2010, corporate advertising was extended to print media, particularly newspapers, to provide information on CSR initiatives and promote a fuller understanding of the group's activities.

Seven main CSR initiatives of the Ajinomoto Group were featured in newspaper advertising, providing information on its wide scope activities to a diverse readership. The group also advertised in magazines, tailoring information to match the interests of each respective publication's readership.

The Ajinomoto Group will continue to carry out corporate advertising campaigns to further raise its public profile, in addition to other means for directly engaging with the public, such as factory tours, various public events, and lectures.

Corporate Advertising

Newspaper advertising