



Preface

Special Issue on Human-Centered Design

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With information technology (IT) systems now being used in all aspects of life from the daily tasks that we perform at work to everyday activities in our personal lives, IT has truly become an indispensable part of modern society. As a leading supplier of IT systems, Fujitsu aims to provide solutions that are easy to use, easy to understand, and attractive for each and every user. At the same time, the concept of “diversity” has become increasingly important from a corporate viewpoint. Being receptive to the wide variety of users has become a strong requirement in corporate operations and services, and accommodating diversity has come to be viewed as an element of corporate social responsibility.

The 1990s saw the birth of human-centered design (HCD), which aims for equipment and systems designed to be easy to use, easy to understand, and worry-free from a user’s viewpoint. This approach focuses attention on the user’s workplace. It investigates user issues and solutions and aims to make ongoing improvements with user participation. The basic ideas behind HCD were formalized in “ISO 13407: 1999 Human-centered design processes for interactive systems” in 1999 and have since found widespread application in many countries.

In the 1980s, Fujitsu was among the first to introduce the idea of “ergonomics” by promoting the design and provision of IT systems based on the physical and cognitive characteristics of human beings. At that time, in addition to IT systems, Fujitsu offered its customers operations management, space design, and other systems that could provide a total solution for the workplace. In the 2000s, Fujitsu took up the cause of “universal design” to enable more of its customers to use IT. The adoption of universal design became a company-wide movement encompassing a wide variety of activities including the creation of

customer-centered processes, a broader reflection of customer opinions in product development, improvement of equipment and solutions, improvement of quality, and free provision of tools. All of these activities can be said to be connected to Fujitsu's promotion of HCD.

For an IT system to be used effectively as a key element of management, it must be optimized for the people that use it, the tasks to which it is applied, and the place where it is used. This requires that we observe users carefully, identify on-site problems, and make improvements accordingly. In this regard, HCD has never been more important than now. I believe that HCD activities help to promote "field innovation" and a management approach that begins with the customer.

In this special issue, we introduce the current state of HCD in Japan and other countries and describe how HCD is progressing throughout the Fujitsu Group in many areas. We describe processes and organizational restructuring to promote HCD, the development of HCD-related guidelines and tools, and product case studies in Fujitsu. It is our sincere hope that this special issue will help engender a deeper understanding of HCD as an increasingly global issue and clarify the efforts that are being expended to promote its use. We also expect the information and ideas provided here to serve as a springboard for achieving more efficient business operations and richer lives in cooperation with our customers.