

Interview with Executives at King SkyFront No.5

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Chemistry is originally my field of specialty.

I was doing basic research, and when I began my doctoral course my supervisor suggested that I do research that would be more useful to society.

I was told the answer was biomaterials, or polymers used in medicine.

And that's what I decided to do.

Big discoveries are not always made through basic research.

All discoveries are made through applied development.

Basic research can lead to applied development, but it work the other way around, too.

We carry out research into using polymer micelles as drug delivery systems, so in a way, it aims to resolve issues.

New polymer micelles and associates are being discovered that could not be discovered through basic research.

Separating basic and applied research is a 19th century concept.

There was lack of information then, and researchers had no way of exchanging information.

So, even if really useful basic research was being carried out, the researcher himself didn't know it.

And likewise, applied researchers could make an amazing discovery and not realize it.

That's how it was, but now we live in an information society.

The two will merge in Kawasaki.

That's what creating a place for open innovation is all about.

It's a melting pot for basic and applied research.

Placing yourself in this melting pot will make you realize the value of your research.

Working on your own, you can't tell the difference between useless and valuable research.

But working with others makes you realize the value of your research, or how pointless it is.

The objective of working with researchers from other fields is not the collaboration itself.

It's the exchange of opinions among people with different perspectives, which gives birth to new ideas leading to breakthroughs.

NanoCarrier itself is a company that's a melting pot.

There are experts in pharmaceuticals, polymers, and business.

The company already has everything needed to develop technology.

A place must be able to attract all kinds of people, and it must be convenient.

Having an airport nearby is important so that people can visit.

This is a global trend.

Kawasaki was a cutting-edge city in the Meiji period.

It was where cutting-edge industries of the time gathered.

So, I think the location is excellent.

Companies also naturally gathered in such places.

Especially chemical manufacturing industries.

We're manufacturing for the medical industry, so we can't do everything at university.

Combining the technologies and ideas of different chemical industries allows us to realize that we can do all kinds of things.

Kawasaki is an ideal place with its gathering of different industries and good access by air.

A gathering of manufacturers alone are like “babes in the woods” who sometimes make useless things.

You need people who can see things from a user’s perspective.

So, the place has to attract people involved in medicine.

The worst thing you can do is to say,

“I’m a manufacturer.”

“You’re a user.”

It never works.

Traditional industry-academia collaboration fails because people say,

“This is the job of the university.”

“This is the job of the company.”

When this happens, the company takes home the seeds sown by the university, and the university’s involvement ends there.

There’s a division of labor, and information is cut off.

And when something goes wrong, they blame each other.

University researchers and ventures or corporate researchers are on an equal footing.

No matter how good the seeds, it’s useless if it can’t be used.

No matter how good the improvement technology, it’s useless if there’s nothing to improve.

So they need each other.

Companies may think they know more about the world.

But this may just be conceitedness.

University researchers may think their research is the best.

But the company may have a better understanding of its essence.

No good results will be achieved unless they express their opinions.

That’s why university researchers must be involved to the end, until the product is ready for commercialization.

That’s what’s needed.

People shouldn't retreat into their shells or decide their own roles.

This only limits your potential.

It's also antisocial.

You're saying, "I'll take it from here."

"Can you really handle it?"

"Don't you need other people's ideas, too?"

You don't know where or when innovation will occur.

People's talents shouldn't be boxed in from the beginning.

You need a system that allows access from anywhere and enables people to work together.

Developmental research can lead to basic research and vice versa.

That's what speeds up innovation.

When Kawasaki starts giving birth to new innovation, that's when people will start to realize.