



Executive Webinar Series

Leading from the Living Room: Adobe Japan

Full transcript

Moderator: **Sarah Liu**, Founder & Managing Director, The Dream Collective

Guest: **Natsumi Akita**, Vice President of Marketing, Adobe Japan

Sarah: Hello, everyone, welcome to *Leading from the Living Room*, brought to you by The Dream Collective. What *Leading from the Living Room* is, it's really live unfiltered conversations with global executives around the world. Today, we're so glad to have Natsumi Akita-san with us, and she will be sharing with us her own personal story, her professional journey, and also what Adobe Japan is actually doing for employees, for their team, for clients and for the business world during this unprecedented time.

For everyone who might be new to The Dream Collective community, we are a global diversity and inclusion consulting firm. Our mission, really, is to work with businesses to help them attract, retain or advance female talent. And we do that through consulting services, we do that through leadership training experiences, and we do that in the way of branding content campaigns and initiatives as well. And today, we actually have people literally dialing in from around the world – we've got people from Australia, from New Zealand, from Japan, from Singapore, from the US, and from the UK as well. So, we're really excited to be embarking on this journey with you, Natsumi-san, to actually hear a little bit more about your story.

And so, before we kick right into it, I might take a couple of seconds to just introduce myself. I'm the Founder and Managing Director of The Dream Collective. And we have here with us, Natsumi-san, she is the Vice President of Marketing at Adobe Japan. I'm really excited to be sharing with you her story today. So, Natsumi-san, I might get right into it because we are actually going to get you to share your professional journey a little

bit directly with the participants. So can you tell us a little bit about your professional journey that's brought you to the current leadership position? I think probably, specifically, I know you've changed industry a couple of times, so can you talk us through that as well?

Natsumi: Thank you, Sarah. Hello, everyone, my name is Natsumi Akita, I'm the Vice President of Marketing at Adobe Japan. It's great to be here today. I have over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, including Citibank, MasterCard, HSBC, and Japanese banks such as Mitsubishi and Shinsei Bank, as a professional marketer. In 2017, I joined Adobe from MasterCard, and then I was told by many people that I was making a drastic career transition and some people in the financial services industry warned me that the tech industry will be a closed-door community and only certain folks can make it. Well, the reverse might be also true. In general, it might be a very difficult challenge to jump into an industry that you do not have enough experience in, in your 40s. But I think it is easier than most people think to transition into tech. This is my personal opinion, but compared to FSI (financial services industry), I think tech companies are casual and flexible industry. Maybe some people may have a different opinion, but this is just my opinion. In the tech industry they have a diverse workforce, it's easier to work remotely, even from home, not entirely male dominated, and it is a great place to work, especially for people who want to achieve career balance with personal life, I think.

So since I joined Adobe, my team members and my colleagues in Japan, and in the US and other countries, including Australia, Singapore, or some other Asian countries, and even India, as well as my boss, they helped me a lot in many ways to catch up as soon as possible. So I was very impressed by Adobe's inclusive culture. Actually, personally, I have been a big fan of Adobe since I was in my 20s, so I'm very happy to have joined Adobe, and very excited that I can promote the products and services that I love and I'm proud of.

Sarah: Yeah. I love that you said that the technology industry is actually more inclusive than you think, because I think sometimes, particularly here in Australia, I think that's a global perception as well, that tech is a closed community. So it's actually really good to

hear that it's not as exclusive as you think and it's actually easier or it can be easier than other industries to transition into. So you talked about you being a big fan of Adobe since your 20s. Why is that? What attracted you to the brand?

Natsumi: Actually, when I was in my 20s, I studied at Graduate School of Kellogg Business School in the United States. And at that time, I was so shy, and I couldn't speak English well. I was shy but I wanted to communicate with many people and I had something that I needed to deliver, a message that I wanted to deliver to others. Therefore, my hobby at that time was web authoring. I created my own website with Adobe's tools such as Photoshop and Illustrator.

Sarah: Oh, wow, you did that?

Natsumi: Yes! So since then, I have been a big fan of Adobe, personally. Also, in my professional life, when I worked for Citibank, as the head of the Digital Solutions Department, I wanted to learn more about digital marketing related tools, and I found Adobe had been in a pioneering position. Therefore, I visited Adobe's office in Tokyo, with my team members, and trained on a tool such as Adobe Analytics for several days. It was a really exciting experience for me, and I could learn a lot as a digital marketer. Also, when I was working for some financial company, I fully used Adobe's document cloud products such as Adobe Acrobat, as a user, and Acrobat helped me to streamline internal document processes. So it helped me a lot. So that's how I became a fan of Adobe, both professionally and personally.

Sarah: Great. Well, you'll be glad to know that here at The Dream Collective, we're a team for Adobe as well. I personally don't know what we would do without Adobe Acrobat. And I think, Natsumi-san, when we were even talking about your story, you talked about, yes, you're a Vice President of Marketing at Adobe Japan, one of the most senior female executives in the tech industry in Japan, but at the same time, what is also a really big part of you is your family life. And that's really important to you. Can you talk to us a little bit about your personal side of the world?

Natsumi: Yes. In my personal life, I have been married for 23 years, and I'm a mother of three children – two boys and one girl. And as a mother of three children, I love traveling with them, and every weekend we take karate lessons together, and we are aiming to get

black belts in the near future. Still, the color of my belt is purple, so the next level is brown, purple, brown and black. So, it's a little far...

Sarah: It's really good.

Natsumi: Thank you. I also love drinking wine with my husband – I have a wine sommelier certificate. I love traveling overseas and I have visited more than 40 countries with my family. So yeah, sometimes I go to the west coast for business trips, and if I have time, I drop by Napa or Sonoma. Sonoma is great. One of the alumni of Kellogg, Ken Freeman and his wife, Akiko Freeman, are running a winery called Freeman Winery, so I drop in there. Napa and Sonoma are very beautiful places. And even if you don't drink alcohol, I strongly recommend you to go there. And, of course, their wine is great. So just for your information, Freeman Winery is great and they will have a virtual wine tasting tomorrow morning, Japan time. And that event will be open to the public, so if you have time, please check it.

Sarah: Yeah. I love it! Not only are we tuning in and for professional and business advice, we're also getting a snippet into wine recommendations. Yeah, I love that. Freeman Wineries.

So, Natsumi-san I want to probably ask you a little bit more around the current situation, this sort of like crisis that we're in. I think this has now become the new normal for many of us. What do you feel in your career has prepared you to lead through this crisis? And can you give us specific examples?

Natsumi: I'm in charge of marketing and communications, and I think marketing and PR people are always somewhat prepared for crises. Japan has often been hit by various natural disasters such as big typhoons or earthquakes, and we have been required to react to them with agility. For example, in the event of a big disaster, such as the big earthquake in 2011, at that time I was working in the financial industry and the financial markets became very volatile. And in that case, marketers and PR people in financial industries need to provide information to their customers promptly. Also, it may be necessary to cancel big events, stop advertising or refrain from using social media. So, since I have always been asked to respond quickly in an emergency through my career, I think my career has pretty much prepared me for crisis.

Sarah: Fantastic. And so talking about a crisis and all the challenges, in your current role as VP of Marketing at Adobe Japan, what has been the most challenging for you during this time?

Natsumi: Well, there are many things happening. One of the examples is, we were planning to invite more than 20,000 people in Las Vegas and have an event called Adobe Summit at the end of March. But in light of the COVID-19 situation, just two weeks before the Adobe Summit, we made a decision to cancel the in-person event and decided to do it digitally. It's a big decision. It's a really big decision. Events are one of the most important elements for my team. Our events drive tremendous visibility and buzz for our solutions and our products, and provide a venue for our customers and partners to be inspired, and network and learn. So, initially, it was very disappointing for my team because we are very proud of Adobe's events, and we really love them. But we are the digital experience company and we thought that we need to set a new bar for virtual events using our own technology. So it was a fabulous cross-company effort, and as a result, hundreds of thousands of customers participated in the summit digital experience.

So we have created an opportunity for Adobe to the emerging digital events and attract a much larger audience from all over the world. So if you did not have a chance to check our digital summit on adobe.com, please check it. Anyone can view the content for free. Sorry, I'm talking too much...

Sarah: That's alright.

Natsumi: So in October this year, we will host Digital MAX, which promises to be one of the most imaginative and innovative digital events of the year. So let me explain about MAX briefly because I guess some of you may not know what MAX is. The Adobe MAX is our annual big event. And at MAX, we announce major changes and new features in our Creative Cloud and I'm sure that Adobe MAX is the world's biggest design conference for people involved in all kinds of creative work. So people who are working for Adobe are very proud of MAX. So for this year, as always, we will be unveiling the latest Creative Cloud innovations, hearing from some of the most inspirational creative leaders in the world, and creating new and exciting ways to connect our community. And this year, the magic of Adobe MAX will be open to everyone, like the digital summit. It will be

completely free to attend this year. So planning is already underway and there are some truly amazing ideas brewing. I think some of you may be using our tools, and if you are interested in our latest technology, please look forward to Digital MAX.

Sarah: Adobe Digital MAX. I think what's really interesting, Natsumi-san, is that we're seeing new opportunities emerge out of this crisis, that accessibility to products, to services, to experiences are now automatically accessible on a global scale. So I think that's a really interesting angle to look at it as well. Often, when we talk about challenges during this time, a lot of people actually tell us about remote working, and particularly in Japan, where, I suppose, that the adoption is not as high probably relative to other countries. So with remote working now becoming the new normal, I think that a lot of people struggle to navigate between work and life, and the line is now more and more blurred. How do you navigate that, as a leader, and actually for your team as well?

Natsumi: Yeah, you're right. It is becoming increasingly challenging for many people, including myself, to balance personal and professional lives. In my case, I started working remotely in March, and I can tell you that I'm feeling this acutely myself.

Sarah: Because you also have three children with you at home, right?

Natsumi: Yeah, I have three children. So everyone's personal circumstances may be different – you may be living alone, caring for elderly parents or trying to encourage your kids to learn remotely, like myself. And in my case, satisfying endless appetites of my kids, dirty dishes, and the huge amount of laundry produced by my three children, that's really tough. The one constant is that everybody needs flexibility. So I want to reinforce that we all need flexibility in this situation. I feel blessed to work at a company like Adobe during this time. We are working very hard to keep our customers up and running, and we are generously supporting COVID-19 related charities in the communities in which we live and work. But we also need to support ourselves. That may mean starting our day a little later so we can spend time with our kids, taking time out of the day to exercise, having a proper lunch, or just closing our eyes and sitting quietly for a few minutes.

Now, more than ever, I think it is critical that we take care of both our physical and emotional wellbeing. So, for those who are struggling with work and life integration under the COVID-19 situation, my other recommendation for them is that you have to take

control and you have to ask. You need to speak up. Nobody will tell you, "oh, you are in trouble, so do you want to do this blah, blah, blah". If you are a good employee and the company really cares for you, I think we can make something, work it out. So, again, everything starts with you, so speak up. That's really important.

Sarah: Yeah, fantastic. And I think that right now, for all the participants tuning in, you will see a polling question appear on your screen, and this is actually a live polling – we're asking everyone who is watching right now to put in their answers and response and how they feel around those questions. And you will be able to see how people are voting as well. So feel free to click through to the polling questions as they come through, because we actually find they give us great insight of how people are doing, generally, as well.

So, Natsumi-san, you talked about, obviously, the working from home flexibility requirements. And with school closure now happening also around the world, how are you navigating this situation around working parents? People usually ask me, "hey, how are things working from home?" I'm like, "it's great!" because I don't have children but it's actually a very different experience for working parents. So what's your experience throughout this period?

Natsumi: Great question. Well, right now, I'm having a tough time, like many other working parents in Japan. I have three children – from a high school student to a nursery school student – so since the emergency declaration was issued in Japan, I'm staying at home with three children. And my husband is a Japanese government official, so from time to time, he has to come to office, so he is not at home most of the time. So I'm working from home while taking care of three children.

Sarah: Wow!

Natsumi: Yeah, it's really tough. And unfortunately, I cannot get support from my babysitter because she also needs to stay at home. So I am managing to work from home and raise my children while (sometimes) sharing roles with my husband. So to cope with the stress of this situation, I'm making various dishes every day since I love cooking. Actually, I took some cooking classes such as Indian dish or Singaporean dish when I was young. So every day, I change the theme of the dishes, such as the Italian, Chinese,

Vietnamese, Japanese, like that. So this helps me to overcome the stress of work from home.

Sarah: Yeah. I think your family are certainly very lucky to be able to enjoy all that amazing cooking. And so, Natsumi-san, are you able to share with us maybe some specific examples of how Adobe is supporting your employees during this time?

Natsumi: Oh yeah. I just found the question was posted.

Sarah: Yes.

Natsumi: Actually, since this situation started, Adobe has implemented a lot of things and Adobe executives are trying to deeply understand how the employees in each country are doing. In fact, I'm having a casual chat with the Executive Vice Presidents every week, and we have an informal chat with the CEO of Adobe next week – Global CEO Shantanu Narayan. So a conversation is all it takes to get things started. So they are seriously considering how to deal with the situation. As a result, Adobe is providing lots of innovative ideas for employees.

So let me introduce some examples. The first one is maybe the global day off. This is the first time, but tomorrow, May 15, will be a global Adobe day off for all employees, all over the world. Given this day happens to be the United Nations International Day of Families, it's fitting that we celebrate our Adobe family and use this opportunity to focus on our personal wellbeing. So while we each have the flexibility to take time off when we need it, I think we can all agree that there is power in taking time off together to fully unplug.

Sarah: Mm.

Natsumi: This is one of the examples and there are several other examples. Another thing is, this is what I explained to Executive Vice Presidents and this became real; flexible schedules. So with the new and unpredictable situation that this pandemic presents, I think we all need to be understanding of each other, as we tend to our duties. We have duties at home while fulfilling our responsibilities as professionals. If our home obligations are making it difficult to maintain our regular work schedule – actually Adobe used to have the quiet time which starts from 10am to 3pm, so all the employees are encouraged to focus on work during that quiet time, but now it becomes more flexible.

Employees can talk with their managers about concrete ways to create more flexibility. So if he or she prefers to start working early in the morning and stop working around noon, and then at re-start working from evening, that's acceptable. We all need to have the flexibility. And if the team needs meeting-free windows together, we can do that. Wednesday afternoon or Friday afternoon, we don't have the meetings within the team. No meeting is set during that period of time so we can focus on what we need to do. So, yeah, if employees find they need to lower their hours for an extended period, they can talk to their managers about exploring part-time work options as well.

Sarah: Fantastic: And I think what we're seeing, the most successful ones are when people really don't take a cookie-cutter approach, when companies realize that everyone's situation and circumstances and flexibility needs are different now.

Natsumi: Yeah. These things are global actions, but at the same time, locally, my team and I are doing virtual drinking parties, virtual coffee breaks, and virtual exercises as well. So sometimes my team and I are relaxing, and through these activities, we can feel connected. And also Adobe is offering all the employees to spend up to \$500 work from home expense fund for all employees. So using this fund, we can buy comfortable chairs, desks, or big monitors to make the working from home situation more comfortable. So actually this chair, I used the fund to buy this chair I'm sitting on now.

Sarah: Oh, fantastic.

Natsumi: Thank you. Although, I think Adobe already had a working environment where we could work remotely. So the challenge may not be so big a challenge compared to Japanese companies. I guess many Japanese companies don't have this kind of environment, so I think both managers and employees are having a really hard time. So it's a tough situation right now, but through this experience, I think that Japanese companies need to accelerate to digitize their work environment and business processes as soon as possible.

Sarah: Yeah, and I think the working from home expense claim is actually a really practical one.

Natsumi: Yes.

Sarah: What we find is that, a lot of times, yes, it's really easy to say, "hey, work from home" but not everyone has the right tools and the equipment at home. So it's really good to have that as an example for everyone who's tuning in as well. Try and address the practical side of your employees working from home aspects. And we've got a polling question out for you, and for everyone who's tuning in as well: do you think your company will be updating your flexibility or work from home policy post COVID? So, do you see this working from home culture continue when everything goes back to the "old normal" again? And, you know, Natsumi-san, you talked about the virtual drinking and everything; last time, we were talking to the Head of HR, Katsu-san from Microsoft, and he actually said, in Japan, he is looking forward to the day when everyone can have virtual karaoke.

Natsumi: Oh, interesting.

Sarah: Yeah, I think that'd be really fun.

Natsumi: I will try it.

Sarah: Yeah, that's right. Next time, right?

Natsumi: Next time.

Sarah: So, now, I think we've talked about working from home and sort of the balance and what companies can practically do during this time. I want to ask you a question around the sentiment that we see in the market because a study actually revealed that, I think, over 73% of people are feeling very nervous and uncertain about the future. So as business leaders, how can we take ourselves from that nervousness and start switching into a zone where there is innovation and using this opportunity for creativity?

Natsumi: Well, I think every day we are seeing negative news such as many companies' earnings forecasts have been revised downwards, and some of them are unable to continue the business. So the unemployment rate rises, and as a result, I can understand that fear is spreading all over the world. But we should not think about things only in the short term. So instead of focusing on today's problems, I think we should think about what people will need in the future. So, business opportunity must be hidden there.

For example, recently many services that used to be offered in physical spaces are shifting online, such as babysitting services. I found an article yesterday that now babysitting services are available, that even these kinds of services available through online and there is a need. Cooking classes or yoga lessons or even wine tasting classes are now offered online. And recently, in Japan, a major Japanese taxi company has also started meal delivery services. These are just an example. So we should not think of these new services or new challenges as an urgent backup plan in the current COVID-19 situation. We need to think of them as new business because they are the business right now and they could be new opportunities for the future.

So we are now in an uncertain era and may not know exactly where we are going, but we sure know the direction to move in. So we cannot find a way out if we are stuck in the way we have been doing business. We need to have a mind shift. There is no time to waste, I think. So we must overcome this difficult situation with flexible ideas, flexible thinking, and quick actions.

Sarah: Yeah. And what we've seen is also sort of shifting into, rather than reactive, being more proactive is now for business leaders to not just focus on the situation we're in now, but to actually start planning and creating products and services for the future. Even for us, as a business, we're already thinking how businesses will evolve after this COVID-19 crisis. So I think I really resonate with your point about not just thinking about the now, actually thinking about the future, and already start working on that.

And I think that leads directly to a common word that we have been hearing a lot these days, which is around "pivoting". A lot of companies are thinking of ways to pivot so that they can stay essential, stay relevant to customers. What's your experience around that? Can you share with us your perspective or experience?

Natsumi: Yes. Under the COVID-19 situation, I think almost all the companies are now required to change business target numbers, business course, focus area, or business policies, and many things. So in an uncertain era like today, we need to change business priorities flexibly and promptly. So what should be stopped and what should be emphasized and responded to quickly? For example, as I already explained, we planned to conduct the Adobe Summit in Las Vegas at the end of March, and we were planning to

invite more than 20,000 customers from all over the world. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we made a decision to change the event from a physical event to an online event/digital event, just two weeks prior to the event. So it was a really tough time for my team, not just my team, for the entire company, but we managed it. Then as a result, we delivered a great digital event, including more than 100 sessions, and the total number of participants was more than a 250,000. It's great number, isn't it?

Sarah: Yeah.

Natsumi: So through this experience, I think we learn how a crisis can be an opportunity. Initially, we were planning to invite more than 20,000 customers. But finally, the number of participants were more than 250,000. More than 10 times bigger audience.

Sarah: Yeah. I love that because it really actually challenges us as well, as business leaders, to not just like react or respond to get things by, but think about how we really utilize this opportunity. I loved the part about how you actually planned for 20,000 people, but after you took it online, it actually enabled you to get 250,000 people. So I love that as a bit of a success story, because I think people used to be quite skeptical about taking things online, and now I think that's shifted in people's mindset.

Now, I think what we talked about, and also the polling as well, we saw 67% of people on this call saying that they believe that work from and flexibility policy will remain unchanged after COVID-19 as well. So I think the business landscape really has changed forever, and I think Japan will not be the same again. But Japan has actually had its very unique challenges, being a little bit slower to make drastic change. So how do you think we can sustain this change, particularly in Japan?

Natsumi: If I start talking about this topic, maybe I need a full day to focus on this one specific topic. I think one of the biggest problems in Japanese companies is the document process heavily relying on stamps – in Japanese 'hanko'. As you may know, hanko/stamps have been used in the business scene for a long time in Japan. It's a bit tough to say this because I'm also Japanese, but I think I need to be clear; to keep using a stamp is wasteful and nonsensical, to be honest. Now, everything can be done with an electronic signature. using a stamp as a proof of identity does not fit with the current digital age. The stamps themselves are beautiful and great so they could be kept as works of art or for personal

use. So to make a long story short, to sustain the change, I think we need to shift from paper-based operations (which is relying on stamps) to digital documents with electronic signature. I'm also convinced that this change will eliminate long working hours in the Japanese working environment, and more women can work more comfortably.

Sarah: For sure. We've got another polling question up here for all the participants as well: what do you foresee as the biggest challenge in transitioning back to working from the office? So we'd love to hear from everyone, as well, what you think about the situation. But I think, Natsumi-san, the stamp thing is, I think, a real challenge faced by many companies and I think it even made news headline, right?

Natsumi: Yes.

Sarah: About how people literally had to travel back to the office for stamps. So I think rethinking digital solutions, moving away from paper-based culture to digital-based culture. I think for us as well, we use software like DocuSign and practically like Adobe Acrobat...

Natusumi: Oh great!

Sarah: Adobe, that's right. That's really changed us as well, in order to take everything on. I love Adobe Acrobat. So a lot of really practical tools that can help business leaders. So I really encourage everyone to check those out, just practically as well, to help them transition back into the post COVID-19 paperless world.

Natsumi: Yes. It's also good for the environment. We don't need to cut trees any longer.

Sarah: Exactly. So Natsumi-san, you actually referenced female leaders and women in leadership, which I know is a really big passion area of yours, and people look to you in Japan as one of the most prominent women in technology. How do you support the next generation of female leaders yourself?

Natsumi: Well, this is my personal opinion, but I think a casual and two-way mentoring will be the answer. Leveraging off my career experience in different multinational companies, as well as my personal experiences as a working mother of three children, I think I can provide the necessary guidance based on my past experience in both my

private life and professional life. So I'm now acting as a mentor for female entrepreneurs, at the request of Tokyo Metropolitan Government. I'm also giving lectures at Waseda Business School and the University of Tokyo, from time to time. So I'm very happy to support the younger generation with advice on career transitions, building careers in both Japanese and non-Japanese companies, or work-life balance, or how to succeed as a working mom, and how do you study abroad. So, yeah, casual and two-way mentoring, that's what I can provide to the next generation.

Sarah: So, with the next generation of female leaders coming through, do you ever feel like you're giving them advice but it's like giving advice to your younger self?

Natsumi: Yeah...

Sarah: Because you're almost seeing them as the next generation coming through...

Natsumi: Yes, that's right.

Sarah: So what advice do you give them?

Natsumi: Well, the advice that I will give to my younger self will be that in the past almost 30 years of professional life, I made a lot of mistakes, so maybe what I will deliver to my younger self will be, don't be afraid to make a mistake. Everyone fails. Challenges will be a constant in life and you will make a lot of mistakes, and sometimes you will be depressed by repeated failures. But don't be afraid. Failure will teach you the greatest lessons and often shows you a better way of doing things next time. So, last but not least, be nice to your family and your friends, and remember to treat them as you would want to be treated. They will stand by you when you're feeling down. I think that's a message for my younger self.

Sarah: I think I really need that advice – be kind to your family. I think everyone needs that right now. If you work from home, you're like in your family's face 24/7, I think we all need to remember that. Yeah, be kind to each other. So what we've seen today also from some of the polling is that, I think majority of people (55%) are saying that working from home, the biggest challenge they face is actually how to actually manage those arrangements. So I think that's a really interesting insight for everyone who's tuning in. And for business leaders, the practicality around managing those, giving them the right

tools, having the right conversations, having the right structure and framework and setting the right expectation will be key to unlocking work from home success from here on. Natsumi-san, thank you so much for your advice for everyone – your younger self, for female leaders, but I think that's actually relevant for everyone right now.

As we wrap up this conversation, I'm really keen to understand for you, personally, what is most audacious dream that you are committed to making a reality, either personally or professionally? And this is actually a question that we ask most of our guest speakers, because we here, at The Dream Collective, we're all about realizing audacious dreams. So, what are some of yours?

Natsumi: Well, diversity and inclusion is not advanced in Japan, as you know. Gender equality is very different in Japan, compared to the US. I mean, Japan is much more behind the US. As many of you remember, Japan ranked 121 out of 153 participating countries in the World Economic Gender Gap Index which was released last December. The ranking was the lowest ever and, of course, the lowest among G7 countries. So, I think that, behind-the-scenes, Japanese companies are still dominated by men and it is not easy for women to play an active role in Japanese companies. So, in general, Japanese work cultures still develop around full-time male employees working long hours, so we don't have enough support system for mothers wanting to return to work after giving birth, which places women in a difficult situation of having to choose between either forging a career or becoming a stay-at-home mom.

So, recently, companies have increased the number of women in managerial positions, but still, many female managers remain either unwed or are married but have chosen not to have children. Nowadays, there is a lot of awareness around the gender gap in Japan, which makes many people aware of helping women move forward in their career. So the situation is changing but, personally, I think the speed of the change is still slow in Japan. But due to COVID-19, working from home is now getting more acceptable, and as a result, I think it will be easier for homemakers to start working. I hope this will accelerate the transition in the Japanese society. And personally, I have three children. Hopefully, this kind of challenge will be resolved in the future when they are grown. That's my dream.

Sarah: Fantastic. I think that's my dream and the dream here at The Dream Collective as well. And that's very much our mission – to propel more women into leadership roles, not just in Australia, not just in Japan, but actually across the world. So thank you so much for sharing that vision and actively investing your time in mentoring the next generation of women and invest your time in really building the business community and women in leadership. So thank you so much for that.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who's tuning into this session as well. Thank you so much for joining us from our living room – but for me not the living room, from my study room. And also, the next session we have, which is coming up in on 26th May, I believe, we actually have the head of HR for Uber in Australia & New Zealand sharing with us. So tune in on 26th May, we have Susie from Uber Australia & New Zealand sharing with us some best practices, really practical guidelines framework on how businesses can work closely with the employees to not just survive, but really thrive post these COVID-19 circumstances. So, once again, thank you, everyone, for joining us. Make sure that you stay connected, make sure you subscribe to thedreamcollective.com.au so you can receive all the information.

We actually are just about to launch a program called *She Pivots* that's specifically designed for women who have lost their jobs or who have been negatively impacted due to COVID-19 to come to the program, and, potentially, get job opportunities after the program as well. So make sure you stay connected, link up through all the social media channels so you can get the latest and firsthand news about that.

We are also about to launch a research that we conducted with over 2,000 participants across Australia to understand what kind of businesses actually succeed and are able to innovate during this time and throughout COVID. We wanted to assess the impact diversity in leadership had on business performance during this time. Some really fascinating results have emerged. So I really welcome and encourage everyone to stay connected, subscribe to our newsletter so you can get all that information firsthand.

Thank you all very much, and Natsumi-san, thank you once again for joining us from your living room. Appreciate all your insight, your knowledge. And thank you, everyone, for a beautiful hour together. Thank you.

Natsumi: Thank you, Sarah. Thank you, everyone.

Sarah: Thank you.