

Long-Awaited Opening of Hakata Marui: A Store Co-Created with Customers

Hakata Marui was built from the ideas and wishes of more than 15,000 customers over a period of roughly two years. Holding over 600 planning meetings with customers, we engaged in enthusiastic discussions with our customers on all aspects of the store. Topics discussed included the store’s name, main considerations and concept, floor layouts, product lineups, product creation initiatives, EPOS card designs, and customer service.

The co-creation store development venture was started in October 2013 based on our desire to make Hakata Marui a store that members of the community would truly embrace. In July 2014, we began inviting customers to participate in planning meetings, hoping to gain their aid in making their ideal store. We launched our first community website in November of the same year to serve as a forum for a wide range of customers to take part in the co-creation process without being restricted by place or time.

Customers offered various opinions, with some stating that they wanted a store that could be visited daily while others expressed desires for a comforting atmosphere or options to enjoy activities aside from shopping. Advancing discussions driven by these

opinions, we eventually decided that the concept for Hakata Marui should be “a store in which customers can find what suits them best.” Co-creation efforts were not limited to the store itself. We also utilized customer input to make original designs for Rakuchin Kirei Pumps (⇒□P56-57), the unique EPOS card based on traditional *Hakata Ori* fabric (⇒□P50), and various other Kyushu-based products and services. In determining the distribution of sales floors, it became apparent that customer interest in apparel was low. While Marui stores have previously devoted around 60% of their sales floor to apparel, only 30% of the sales floor at Hakata Marui was used for this category. The remaining 70% was allocated to life-style items, making Hakata Marui the first co-created next-generation lifestyle-oriented Marui store ever.



Customer participants of planning meetings in front of newly opened Hakata Marui (May 2016)




Connections with Customers in the Kyushu Region




Aggregate total of customers participating in store development

More than **15,000**



Planning meetings held with customers

More than **600**



Number of customers visiting during first month after opening

2.3 million



Number of EPOS cardholders in Kyushu region at time of Hakata Marui opening

More than **130,000**

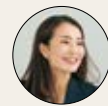


Hakata Marui community website (Japanese only)
hakata-fan.0101.co.jp/



Reunion with Customers Partnering in Co-Creation a Month after Opening

Planning meetings with customers took place over a span of two years. A month after the opening of Hakata Marui, the customers that had taken part in these meetings gathered once again to look back at past meetings and offer their opinions and impressions of the now-opened Hakata Marui.



Miku Nagano Sales Representative, Hakata Marui

A month has passed since the opening of Hakata Marui. I recall that many of you were unfamiliar with Marui stores when you first participated in the planning meetings. Based on your input, we devoted around 70% of the floor space to dining and lifestyle categories. This structure is radically different from traditional Marui stores.



I am originally from Tokyo, so I, of course, had an understanding of what constituted a Marui store. However, none of my friends from Hakata knew about Marui. I was incredibly excited to be chosen to participate in the planning meetings. I now feel like somewhat of a "Marui Ambassador."



I was born and raised in Hakata, and I did not know about Marui previously. However, I have been intimately connected with Marui for nearly two years through the planning meetings, and I am quite attached to this store that we have made together. I have invited friends to join me on numerous excursions to Hakata Marui, and I even applied for an EPOS card. In particular, I feel a special attachment to REC COFFEE and the FAR EAST BAZAAR dried fruits store after becoming acquainted with the store managers during the planning meetings. This type of personal connection certainly adds something to my visits.

Thank you for your input. I feel that we were truly able to incorporate the opinions of everyone that participated in the planning meetings, including tenants. As a result of this support, tenants have been able to get off to a strong start, exceeding their goals.



Dashidokoro Hyoshiro is a great place to buy gifts, especially due to the small and visually appealing packages. I was quite vocal on this topic during the planning meetings as the prior product packages tended to be too large or have logos that just felt outdated. When the store opened, I was very pleased to see the products in the packages and with the logos that had been designed for Hakata Marui based on our feedback. This satisfaction was all the greater when I learned that these Hakata Marui-style packages and logos would be introduced at other stores.



Apparel and shoes sales floors are not distinguished by size, making it easy to go shopping with friends. Stores commonly divide their floors by size or taste, which can be a cause of concern when shopping with a friend. Hakata Marui, meanwhile, eliminates this concern. This completely new store has given me the opportunity to find exquisite products and allowed me to become friends with fellow planning meeting participants.



Move from Customer to Sales Staff after Participating in Planning Meetings

Miyuki Ishida

Sundry Sales Floor Staff, Hakata Marui



By participating in planning meetings, I came to be aware of MARUI GROUP's strong commitment to invigorating the Hakata area, a sentiment that gave me great joy as someone born here. After Hakata Marui opened, I found myself wanting to make this store a bigger part of my life. I hope to help build an even more exciting Hakata together with customers as a staff member.



Interpersonal connections are important. In fact, one customer that participated in the planning meetings is now part of the sales staff at Hakata Marui.

There is a real aura of enthusiasm around the planning meeting members. Talking with people of all ages and genders at the meetings was an experience not found in my daily life. The meetings were consistently energizing as a result.



The atmosphere at planning meetings was always laid back, and this made it easy to speak frankly. The meeting proceedings themselves were shaped by our input, which really closed the gap between all members. I also often found myself posting ideas I had after getting home on the community website.



I felt a growing sense of anticipation every time I participated in a planning meeting. Many members stated that they wanted to see a store that is completely new to Kyushu, and that wish became a reality. It feels good to have your wishes fulfilled.

Hakata Marui's overall atmosphere is quite pleasant. It is open, and the lighting is superb. Even the music played in the store is excellent. I became so fond of this music that I actually play my original Hakata Marui CD at home on a regular basis.



Thank you all for joining us today. We made many new discoveries thanks to your input. We will continue to use your feedback to improve Hakata Marui going forward. Furthermore, we plan to develop other Marui stores through co-creation with customers and business partners in the future.



Videos of interviews with customers can be viewed on the following website (Japanese only).
www.0101.co.jp/090/hakata-special/introduce.html

Ajino Hyoshiro's Co-Creation Realizing Innovation, Uprooting Past Conventions

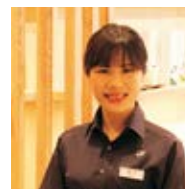
Ajino Hyoshiro and MARUI GROUP share a common trait in that they both have a corporate culture of listening to customer input that dates back to their founding. Co-creation is an innovation that goes beyond previous conceptions, uprooting past conventions to work together in creating customer happiness.

Ajino Hyoshiro's Philosophy Dating Back to 1900

Ajino Hyoshiro was the first in the world to supply Japanese soup stock containing flying fish in a special paper package designed for easy cooking. This company practices a corporate philosophy of selflessness that inspires its employees to let go of their own interests to seek the heights of compassion, effectively forgetting themselves to serve others. For this reason, the greatest joy at Ajino Hyoshiro is found in the happiness of customers, particularly when a delicious taste coaxes out an unconscious smile. With an ear turned always to the voices of customers and a critical eye toward the taste of its products, Ajino Hyoshiro forges ahead with research and development aimed at responding to the ever-changing needs of its customers. These efforts are guided by a slogan of "simple, convenient, and tasty."

Ajino Hyoshiro's history can be traced back to Kappo Hyoshiro, a restaurant that the current president's grandfather opened in Fukuoka Prefecture in Kyushu in 1900. It was the joy of the owner to look out from the kitchen to catch a glimpse of customers' happy faces as they enjoyed culinary satisfaction. Hoping to deliver this taste to customer homes in a no-hassle manner, Ajino Hyoshiro developed special packages filled with Japanese soup stock containing flying fish in 1988, sealing an easy secret to heightening the flavor of meals in every package. When this product was launched, flying fish soup stock was not yet widely known in Japanese kitchens. Ajino Hyoshiro thus had to begin by traveling to department stores across the nation to promote sales through the provision of samples. The feedback received from customers, sometimes praise with a smile for the flavor of this product, other times criticism, served as the point of origin for Ajino Hyoshiro. Due to these efforts, this company's multipurpose soup stock is now a well-loved fixture in countless kitchens, where it helps users prepare authentic cuisine with ease.

New History Born Out of Customer Input



Yuri Yokote
Manager,
Dashidokoro Hyoshiro

In setting up shop in Hakata Marui, Ajino Hyoshiro chose to take a new step and create Dashidokoro Hyoshiro, a store integrated with a dining establishment, which represents this company's debut in the restaurant industry. Ajino Hyoshiro first unveiled its menu for this establishment, a lineup of dishes that use the flying fish soup stock it prides itself on together with local Kyushu ingredients, at a planning meeting with customers held by MARUI GROUP, in November 2015. Unfortunately, the response from local customers was harsh, with comments stating that the dishes lacked a unique pull. This criticism extended to its standard products, which were deemed to have outdated package designs. Ajino Hyoshiro pursued improvements, but soon only three months remained before the opening of Hakata Marui.

Always remaining true to its flying fish soup stock traditions, Ajino Hyoshiro continued to refine its culinary creations through trial and error and was eventually able to complete its menu before opening. This menu won the approval of customers. The company also redesigned its product packages to more clearly signify its brand, making alterations to its historic logo in the process. Customers were surprised that Ajino Hyoshiro was able to complete both the menu and new packaging before the opening while also expressing their joy at having their feedback reflected. Ajino Hyoshiro remains committed to incorporating customer input to create smiles through delicious tastes.



Ajino Hyoshiro website (Japanese only)
ajino-hyoshiro.com/



Yuri Yokote, Manager of Dashidokoro Hyoshiro (right)
Jun Nishino, Store Manager of Hakata Marui (left)

Accommodation of All Customers through Empathy and Store Environments

MARUI GROUP strives to help all customers enjoy its stores, regardless of their age or gender, and this sentiment of course extends to senior citizens, people with disabilities, non-Japanese people, and members of the LGBT community. At Hakata Marui, we took steps to develop the store from the perspectives of empathy (customer service) and store environment to accommodate all customers so that everyone could enjoy shopping with peace of mind.

Store Developed Emphasizing the Comfort of All Customers

Hakata Marui was developed based on the input of specialists and customers to create a store environment that accommodates a diverse range of customers. We worked with Kyushu University and Lifestyle Design Lab*1 to investigate and analyze the issues and concerns faced by people with disabilities. These investigations helped us find various ideas for improving customer convenience. We also invited individuals that use wheelchairs to take part in customer planning meetings in order to gather more input.

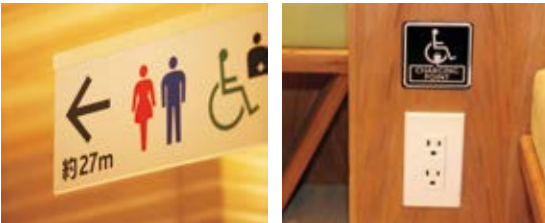
Furthermore, Mirairo Inc.*2 performed a detailed inspection of the store from the perspective of people with disabilities, confirming the appropriateness of various facilities. Through accessibility verification, we were able to implement numerous improvements. For areas in which we could not adapt our store environment, we chose to respond by enhancing our empathy. Based on

this approach, we had employees take tests under Mirairo's Universal Manner Placement Examination program, which is aimed at teaching examinees how to understand other viewpoints. In addition, employees took part in this company's LGBT manner training to acquire basic knowledge about the LGBT community and how to address the needs of its members. Employees received special service caregiver training as well as training on catering to the needs of inbound travelers performed by non-Japanese lecturers. With the skills gained, we aim to foster an environment in which all customers can enjoy shopping.

➡ P62 Accommodation of All Customers

*1 Association that offers training programs taught by people with disabilities with the aim of providing people with disabilities unique opportunities to participate in society while conducting activities for improving the level of customer service and satisfaction at companies

*2 Company that advocates the concept of Barrier Value (taking a disability and turning it into some kind of value or benefit), based on which it proposes universal design goods and services for providing comfort and ease to all



Signs displaying distance to restrooms and outlets for charging electric wheelchairs installed based on ideas from Kyushu University and Lifestyle Design Lab



Detailed inspection of Hakata Marui conducted prior to opening to confirm various facilities under the guidance of Mirairo

www.mirairo.co.jp/company/enprofile



Hakata Marui as Viewed from a Customer Using a Wheelchair

Aya Shinohara

I chose to participate in the Hakata Marui planning meetings as I felt it would be a good opportunity to help contribute to the growth of Hakata. I was also interested in seeing just how much our input would be incorporated into the store. I was pleasantly surprised. The finished store not only had wide passageways and multifunction restrooms on each floor, but also featured signs displaying the distance to restrooms and rest areas with outlets in a space designated for wheelchair charging. I think it is quite rare for shopping centers in Kyushu to offer these kinds of accommodations. This consideration is apparent in customer service as staff offer courteous service while coming down to my level of sight, offering a sense of ease. Hakata Marui is no doubt a store in which wheelchair-users like myself can enjoy their time in comfort.

A Look Back at the Development of Hakata Marui

Hirai: I research inclusive design. In this field, we view the plights of people with disabilities not as physical limitations for them, but rather as social issues. We therefore look to include individuals that have traditionally been excluded from the use of products and services in various fields in the planning and development of new offerings from the early stages. By collecting input from these individuals and sharing recognition of issues in workshop format, we strive to include them in creating feasible designs that meet their needs. These initiatives mirror the concept of MARUI GROUP's co-creation and its focus on all of its customers.

Toyama: It is said that people with disabilities are not often given the opportunity to feel as though they are contributing to society. However, the opinions of these individuals come from different perspectives and are built on different thinking, and can therefore turn our eyes to things we did not previously see.

Hirai: In developing Hakata Marui, MARUI GROUP's employees worked with differently

abled individuals, discussing the issues faced around town and searching for solutions together. These solutions included improvements in store environment as well as in the ease of use of store facilities and in customer service, with improvements based on empathy. The resolution of these issues does not only benefit people with disabilities, it also makes the store more hospitable to senior citizens.

Toyama: When a store like Hakata Marui has charging spaces for electric wheelchairs, it removes some of the concerns faced by people in wheelchairs in leaving the house. In this manner, an increase in the number of such accommodating establishments would help promote participation in society by everyone. I therefore believe that MARUI GROUP's co-creation store development efforts are empowering to numerous people, and I hope that the Company will continue striving to live up to society's expectations going forward.



Yasuyuki Hirai (left)
Professor, Department of Design Strategy
Faculty of Design, Kyushu University

Professor Hirai is a leading authority on inclusive design in Japan. By considering the needs of all, he seeks to apply designs that are accommodating to everyone in public spaces.

Shoko Toyama (right)
Representative Director, Coordinator, Lifestyle Design Lab

Ms. Toyama's work as a coordinator is aimed at helping people with disabilities view their disability as a strength and design a lifestyle in which they can be themselves.

www.facebook.com/ikikatanodesign (Japanese only)