



# Tracking of Happiness to Energize Employees and Society as a Whole

Dr. Kazuo Yano is engaged in researching happiness by utilizing data to elucidate fundamental principles behind the behavior of people. We invited Dr. Yano to discuss the future potential of wellness management with Dr. Reiko Kojima, a company physician at MARUI GROUP who asserts that there is a link between employee happiness and success.

## Dr. Kazuo Yano

Fellow and Director  
Happiness Project Leader,  
Future Investment Division  
Hitachi, Ltd.



## Dr. Reiko Kojima

Executive Officer  
Company Physician  
General Manager, Health Management Division  
MARUI GROUP CO., LTD.

### Application for Measuring Happiness from Body Motions

**Yano:** I first felt the desire to change how Japanese people worked about 15 years ago. As the Internet brought with it the rapid spread of virtual connections, real-life interpersonal connections were becoming more important than ever. Meanwhile, the tools for improving society, such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology, were all qualitative in nature. This realization prompted me to search for a tool for bettering society that was more scientific, more based on hard data. I thus began collecting data from my own body along with massive quantities of data from various business organizations. One finding that was particularly noteworthy was how corporate value and employee happiness, two metrics that initially seem to be in opposition, actually showed a positive correlation when you really delved into the data. Employees who are happy or who make those around them happy perform better and thus contribute to the happiness of their organization as a whole.

**Kojima:** Over the course of nearly 20 years, I have been a company physician at many corporations. In these positions, I always saw that employees who appeared to be energized and happy also exhibited high levels of productivity and creativity. However, it is difficult to communicate the link between happiness and results. Searching for an objective indicator for gauging happiness, I became aware of Happiness Planet, an application that you, Dr. Yano, developed. I felt great potential for this application.

**Yano:** Happiness Planet is a smartphone app that measures body motions related to behaviors that contribute to the happiness of the people around an individual or that indicate active engagement with these people. These measurements are made possible by the accelerometers installed in all smartphones. This app enables individuals to view indicators of their condition, to identify whether it is good or bad, and it is also possible to utilize indicators for organizations and teams. With the cooperation of MARUI GROUP and its hundreds of employees, I was able to collect a great deal of data for verifying the effectiveness of this app.

**Kojima:** MARUI GROUP's Wellness Management Project Team is operated in intervals of one year, with a team of around 50 employees assembled for each interval to play a proactive role in promoting wellness management (healthcare management). The current project team is advancing initiatives on a Companywide basis as well as outside of the Company. One group on this team is examining possible ways of using Happiness Planet in the future.

**Yano:** When you begin tracking metrics, it only natural to start looking for ways to improve those metrics. The means of realizing improvements will vary from person to person. Accordingly, it is important for people to be inspired to make a personal commitment to improvement. In this regard, Happiness Planet allows users to decide in the morning the challenges they will tackle that day. This app offers a selection of around 7,000 such challenges to choose from. Users can also make their own. Furthermore, if a user puts their smartphone in their pocket for only three hours a day, the app will

## Kazuo Yano

Dr. Kazuo Yano obtained a master's degree in physics from Waseda University in 1984 and joined Hitachi, Ltd., thereafter. In 1993, he achieved the world's first successful operation of single-electron memory at room temperature. Since 2004, he has been a world leader in the field of wearable technology and the collection and utilization of big data. His papers have been cited 2,500 times and he has 350 patent applications. He is known for the breadth and depth of his specialties, which range from artificial intelligence to nanotechnology. Dr. Yano's literary work, *Invisible Hand of Data: The Rule for People, Organizations, and Society Uncovered by Wearable Sensors* (published in 2014), was selected as one of 2014's 10 Best Business Books on the BookVinegar book review website. Dr. Yano has a doctorate in engineering and is an IEEE Fellow as well as a visiting professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology.

Photograph taken at "Kyōsō-no-Mori (Forest of Co-Creation)," a facility established at the Central Research Laboratory of Hitachi, Ltd., in April 2019, to accelerate the co-creation of innovation together with customers



measure their body motion to quantify the degree to which they engaged in behavior that contributes to the happiness of those around them.

**Kojima:** In fall 2019, MARUI GROUP will launch an initiative in which everyone will work together to increase their happiness scores using the Happiness Planet. This initiative will make it easier for everyone to take part in wellness management activities while also creating venues through which people from various workplaces and Group companies can gather. Increasing venues for exchanges of diverse knowledge will foster a corporate culture of high creativity.

### Disparity in the Movements of the Bodies of Happy People

**Yano:** Over the past two decades, there has been a boom in scientific research on happiness. Genetics are part of the determining factors behind happiness, and such factors cannot be changed once someone has become an adult. However, there are also factors that can continue to be changed through means such as environmental alterations, training, experience, and learning. Among the most important determining factors behind happiness are working toward some goal, no matter how small, on a daily basis and adopting good habits. Particularly effective is attempting to make the people around you happy or acting for the benefit of these people. Incorporating such behaviors into one's daily life is an extremely effective way of increasing happiness.

**Kojima:** At MARUI GROUP, we conduct the Resilience Program in which managers strive to adopt good habits that help energize and bring happiness to themselves and the people around them over the period of a year, after which they seek to spread these habits throughout their workplace. Employees that find meaning in their work and tackle challenges in a self-driven manner are more resilient in that they are more able to remain committed to overcoming adversity than those employees who feel as though they are being made to work. When people hear the word "happiness," they are inclined to imagine something easy, like flower gardens. However, when we asked a group of more than 500 employees in a training session about the times that they felt the happiest and most fulfilled at work, the answers we received included stories of

overcoming adversity as a team to satisfy customers. I hope to make MARUI GROUP into a happy organization where employees can find joy and fulfillment by tackling such challenges of their own accord.

**Yano:** All activities by people are driven, in the end, by the movement of their muscles. For this reason, the movement of people's bodies is the easiest output to read. Even when sitting, people are not entirely still, but rather are constantly moving. In the case of people that make those around them happy, there is a great deal of disparity between how long they will continue moving once they start. For unhappy people, however, the amount of time between when they start moving and stop moving is usually the same. The values are practically fixed. These characteristics appear in a clear, quantitative fashion when looking at data. What is interesting is that when happy people communicate with the people around them, there is a lot of reciprocity. In fact, the data shows that their body movements often synchronize with the person with whom they are interacting. The ability to engage in effective communication is important, as human relationships and communication are essential to happiness.

**Kojima:** As a company physician, I have spoken with around 5,000 people to date. There are very few people who have exceptional people and communication skills but are in poor health.

### Challenging Environments Fundamentally Related to the Do of Japan

**Kojima:** MARUI GROUP's corporate philosophy calls for us to "continue evolving to better aid our customers" and "equate the development of our people with the development of our company." To enact this philosophy, we are developing frameworks and a corporate culture that offer employees access to challenging environments. These efforts can be seen in our profession change system as well as in Groupwide project teams and the Medium-Term Management Visionary Committee, which are open to voluntary participation.

**Yano:** Challenging environments are important. It is easiest for people to feel fulfilled when they are able to utilize their strengths and skills in challenging environments. If people are placed in environments that are not challenging, they may become complacent or, worse yet, bored.



Challenging environments are fundamentally related to the various *do* of Japan. Someone who practices *shodo* (calligraphy) or *sado* (tea ceremony) continue to hone their art, growing until they die. The act of making a cup of tea can lead one to become aware of changes in the seasons or customer tendencies that they could not perceive when they first took up the art, spurring ongoing growth. The mass production era in which people worked based on manuals to produce large quantities of products was perhaps an outlier in human history. We appear to be returning to an era in which people continue to grow throughout the course of their entire lives.

**Kojima:** I agree. You just made me think that people who join MARUI GROUP naturally begin walking the path, the *do*, of lifelong growth.

### Increased Happiness throughout Society Achieved by Tracking Happiness

**Kojima:** MARUI GROUP's wellness management approach is aimed at generating positive benefits, rather than preventing illnesses and eliminating negative health impacts. This management approach is thus oriented toward the creation of a flourishing and inclusive society

offering happiness to all. I therefore see potential to utilize the objective indicators provided by Happiness Planet in this approach. I understand that Happiness Planet assigns high happiness scores to altruistic actions. MARUI GROUP is promoting financial inclusion. It is possible that, outside of the area of wellness (healthcare) management, the ability to track the happiness of oneself and of the people around oneself could help us propose ways of using money to contribute to the happiness of others. In this manner, I see the potential for MARUI GROUP to contribute to increased happiness scores throughout society by means of its business.

**Yano:** Happiness is contagious. I therefore hope you will use Happiness Planet as a means of spreading such happiness fostering activities to MARUI GROUP's customers and to the rest of society. In the past, corporate value has been quantified through stock price and other indicators. However, these indicators were relatively divorced from people, and data on employees tended to be of a more superficial level, primarily pertaining to career metrics and salaries. I hope to engage initiatives that more directly incorporate the value of people. I believe that such initiatives could change the very way we live.

**Kojima:** You are right. A change in mind-set certainly has the potential to change how someone lives.