



Yasunori Nakagami

Yasunori Nakagami is the representative director and CEO of Misaki Capital Inc. and has served as an external director at MARUI GROUP since 2021. He is a self-proclaimed management enthusiast, placing the management of companies even above eating. Nakagami made his management consulting debut immediately after graduating from university. He also acts as a long-term investor dedicated to an emerging Japan based on the belief that management emphasizing partnership between managers, employees, and shareholders will contribute to improved corporate value.  
[www.misaki-capital.com/en/index.html](http://www.misaki-capital.com/en/index.html)

Arata Sekimoto

At only 13 years of age, Arata Sekimoto is already an unrivaled expert on *yokai* (traditional Japanese mythical creatures). His love of *yokai* extends beyond his research to the sale of books and merchandise on *yokai*. In 2020, he produced and sold keychains of a *yokai* known as *amabie* and used the proceeds from these sales to buy 4,000 hygienic masks, which he donated to local physician associations and healthcare centers. Moreover, he established a company called *Omori wo Tsukuru* ("Shaping Our Sentiments") when he was in the fifth grade of elementary school, and he currently oversees this company as president.  
[egaku.thebase.in/](https://egaku.thebase.in/) (in Japanese only)



Hikari

Hikari refers to herself as a "financial economist cosplayer" committed to connecting the world through cosplay. In addition to acting as a fund manager at financial institutions both in Japan and overseas, she has visited more than 60 countries around the world as a backpacker and sometimes as a guest at overseas events, and her fans can be found across the globe. The number of self-made costumes she has worn over her 19-year career as a cosplayer surpasses 200. In 2017, she started up her own clothing brand centered on the Japanese view of "cuteness" (*kawaii*) with plans for overseas expansion.  
[www.instagram.com/hikari\\_green/](https://www.instagram.com/hikari_green/)

Shoki Takahata

Shoki Takahata is an unstoppable master of radio-controlled (RC) cars. First grabbing the "wheel" when he was 10, his storied racing career includes three consecutive wins at the Japanese national championship as well as a victory at the 2019 IFMAR World Championship for 1.8 IC Off-Road Cars, a world championship event held in California. The envy of RC car racers worldwide, this meticulous craftsman carefully selects the tires and components to be used for each race based on the course and weather, tuning his racing vehicle with millimeter-level precision. When not busy with his day job as an office worker, Takahata will look to broadcast his love of RC cars to the world via social media.



# SUPPORTING EVERYONE’S HAPPINESS AND SELF-EXPRESSION

DIALOGUE 03 — YASUNORI NAKAGAMI — ARATA SEKIMOTO  
 — HIKARI — SHOKI TAKAHATA

## Younger Generations Seeking the Pinnacles of Their Passions

The following is a discussion with Arata Sekimoto, a *yokai* researcher who started his own company while in elementary school; Hikari, an anime and manga cosplayer active around the world who has experience as an institutional investor and markets her own clothing brand; and Shoki Takahata, an RC car lover and world champion racer. These individuals, each seeking the pinnacle of their passions, were met by Yasunori Nakagami, an institutional investor and self-proclaimed management enthusiast who also serves as an external director at MARUI GROUP, who asked them about their respective passions.

### *Yokai*, RC Cars, Cosplay, and Management—To Each Their Own Passion

**Nakagami:** We have asked for you to be here today because each of you is a member of the younger generations who has reached the pinnacle of your passion. I am not young, but I too pursued the pinnacle of my passion—management. In fact, I see myself as a management enthusiast, and I would place managing companies even above eating (laughs). After graduating from university, I joined a management consulting firm. I proceeded to help clients improve their management ability to the greatest degree possible over the next two

decades. I then moved on from consulting to get into investing some 15 years ago. Previously, I had not dreamed that I would eventually start my own company. In June 2021, I became an external director at MARUI GROUP. I am pleased that we were able to arrange such a forum today at which we can discuss the dedication we have each committed to our respective passions. Please start by introducing yourself.  
**Sekimoto:** My name is Arata Sekimoto and I am a *yokai* researcher. I have loved books since I was a little kid. My house is filled with manga, novels, and encyclopedias. Back then, I would often get hooked on something, like insects or dinosaurs, but would quickly lose

interest later. However, this trend stopped when I reached *yokai*. *Yokai* are supernatural elements spoken about in the stories of old. I find the stories of these creatures incredibly interesting as I can sense how they were born out of people imposing their own thinking and imagination on things that happen. I even created my own *yokai* encyclopedia when I was in fifth grade, which was actually published by a major publisher.  
**Takahata:** I am Shoki Takahata, the RC car racing world champion. I first got into RC cars when I was 10. Initially, it was because of my parents’ influence. We had RC cars at home, and they asked if I wanted to try them out. I have never liked losing, and racing, which

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involves receiving a clear numeric rank, thus fit my personality. I also really enjoy tuning my car in preparation for each race. RC car racing entails blazing around tracks 600 to 700 meters long at speeds of up to 120 kph, where a difference of a thousandth of a second can be the difference between winning and losing. This means that precise tuning is crucial to ensure the car drives the way you want it to. A change in how tight one screw is can alter how a vehicle rolls, or leans, around corners. These kinds of small details are addicting. In 2019, I won the IFMAR World Championship for 1:8 IC Off-Road Cars event held in California. This competition uses 1:8 scale cars, the largest class of cars in RC racing. Just like in F1 and other automobile races, RC racing involves teams and sponsors. The world championship takes place once every two years, and the 2021 championship was scheduled to be held in Japan but was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was looking forward to claiming my second consecutive championship win in my country, so this outcome was a bit disappointing.

**Hikari:** Hi, I'm Hikari. I am currently working at an investment fund, and I have been active as an anime and manga cosplayer for 19 years. I love visiting other countries; I have gone on backpacking trips in 60 countries, all while continuing my cosplay activities. I am the type of person who strives for perfection in the things I love. When preparing costumes, I explore various items, including complex wigs and outfits, as I try to express various two-dimensional characters in three dimensions. I upload the pictures I take in these costumes onto social media, and this has gained me a following overseas. One time when I was invited to an overseas cosplay event, I met people who said that they started cosplay a decade ago after learning about me. I was even asked for an autograph for someone

who still had one of my photo books from 10 years ago. I keep doing cosplay because I love how sharing my passion with other cosplayers allows me to connect with people both in Japan and around the world.

**Takahata:** I too have made a lot of connections and had a wide range of experiences due to my love of RC cars. When I won the world championship, even the rival racers were happy for me. This experience changed how I see things: We may be rivals on the track, but off of it we are all the same RC car lovers.

**Sekimoto:** The *yokai* researchers and folklore specialists I have come to know are almost all older than me. Even so, I can talk with these people for hours, and it is always a lot of fun. Still, as there are no *yokai* lovers my age, I do wish I had friends my own age who are also interested in *yokai*.

**Nakagami:** Hearing your stories, I realized two things that all four of us have in

common. The first is the need to research what we are passionate about. I can definitely relate as a management enthusiast. The inability to stop ourselves from getting to the bottom of the things we love is an important part of following our passions. The second thing is the need for comrades with similar interests. At first, it is fun to research by ourselves, but in the end, we want to share our passion with others to enjoy these activities together. Everyone feels this way. Talking with comrades from around the world allows us to surpass the boundaries of space, our age group, and even time.

Ways to Turn One's Passions  
into a Business

**Nakagami:** I understand both Mr. Sekimoto and Ms. Hikari have started your own businesses. Could you please tell me a little about your businesses?

**Sekimoto:** When I was in fifth grade, I founded Omoi wo Tsukuru and became

the president of this company. I was even able to acquire a patent through this company. This story goes back to when I was in third grade. Basically, I wanted to invent something for my homework assignment over summer break, and I wanted my invention to be something that would help people. I started by asking my mom about the issues she faced. She told me that she was having problems with how long it took bath towels to dry after she washed them. To fix this problem, I invented a cylinder that would increase the area of the poles used to hang laundry out to dry to allow for faster drying of even larger items. This was the invention for which I took out a patent. They started selling my invention at ¥100 shops (the equivalent of dollar stores in the United States) in 2021. This made the decision to start a company worth it.

**Hikari:** I started up a clothing brand based on the Japanese view of "cuteness" that offers clothes people can

either wear on regular occasions or use as cosplay items. It used to be that one would have to make their cosplay costumes themselves, which made this a very difficult hobby to get into. I started out knowing nothing about sewing, but I learned by doing. To date, I have made more than 200 costumes. Today, however, one can find low-cost costumes to buy, which has made cosplay a more accessible hobby.

**Nakagami:** You are both turning your passions into businesses. What about you, Mr. Takahata? Do you have any interest in starting a business?

**Takahata:** Right now, I just want to focus on racing, but I am interested in starting up a business in the future. I want to provide services that RC car lovers will like. A little while ago, the racing community was a lot larger. The Japanese championship would see participation by more than 100 people. Today, the participation number is like half that. RC cars is a hobby that requires a lot of time



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and money. As a result, we are losing many racers to video games, which you can play from the comfort of your own home. After I won the world championship, a local TV program asked to do a feature story on me. This story was broadcast on YouTube, where it has been viewed more than a million times. This reminded me that there are still a lot of people who love RC cars.

**Nakagami:** If you were to start a business, it seems like it might be a good idea to use your name as your brand. You are the world champion after all.

**Takahata:** Thank you for the advice. Why did you decide to start a business, Mr. Nakagami?

**Nakagami:** After spending two decades helping companies chart a better course in a management consulting firm, I came to think that I could become an investor. I followed this inclination to join the investment industry. Starting a business is something that you cannot do if you overthink things; the fear of failure will stop you in your tracks.

**Hikari:** I work with some unlisted companies. A lot of companies suffered after the 2008 financial crisis. Companies started based on the passions of managers making amazing products, but there are often times when the managers are more like craftsmen and are not really good at managing. It is great to have a passion, but there are many managers who cannot turn their passion into corporate value.

**Nakagami:** During Japan's period of rapid economic growth, it was important to produce the things people wanted in mass quantities to ensure that everyone could buy them. Today, however, goods do not sell as much. Also, people don't go to stores as often because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone is looking for a way to keep their business alive, but no one has found a good answer. I think we can see a viable answer in MARUI GROUP's approach of supporting individual preferences. RC cars are not something that should be mass-produced for mass consumption, and there is

probably not a lot of demand for *yokai*. Regardless, the niche demand for such items is very strong among enthusiasts. People with niche interests want to immerse themselves in their interests and talk with people who share these interests as much as possible. A company could probably find success by catering to such niche demand and reflecting this in their corporate value.

Result of Spreading One's Passion

**Hikari:** What I was most impressed with when talking with you all today is how everyone is simply continuing to following their passion, rather than jumping on the latest bandwagon. Cosplay was not a common hobby back when I started, and no one could understand my passion. I got a lot of flak from people around me. Not even my family could understand. Luckily, I was able to find a few people who could understand, and we enjoyed our passion together. I just continued with my hobby, and eventually

things like manga, anime, and cosplay, which had been viewed as stuff for nerds, got widespread attention through the government's Cool Japan campaign. It is not like I was trying to make cosplay mainstream, I just kept on doing it because it was what I loved.

**Takahata:** I can relate. When I started RC cars at age 10, my friends just thought I was playing with toys, but today they are cheering me on. The same goes for the company I work at. My coworkers first saw my RC car racing as a hobby, but I started to receive a lot of support after I told them about my victories at the Japanese championship and other events. I sometimes have to take days off to go to races. Luckily, my company understands.

**Nakagami:** It is true that niche interests eventually become mainstream as more and more people become interested in them. The *yokai* that Mr. Sekimoto loves may still be only a small niche, but I am sure the number of people who share your interest will grow if you keep at it. As these allies increase, you will likely see more interest among those your age, and before you know it, *yokai* will be gaining attention on a global scale.

**Sekimoto:** My research has found that there is an astounding number of legends about *yokai* and other supernatural elements in Japan. In other countries, it is common for monotheist beliefs like Christianity to be the norm, with other supernatural elements being relegated to the domains of demons and fairies. Japan, however, has a lot of gods, and stories of supernatural elements are passed down in forms such as legends about *yokai*.

**Nakagami:** Japan is said to have eight million gods. These gods take the form of trees, mountains, and rivers. This belief system seems to be founded on the principle that there is not one main character in life.

**Sekimoto:** That's right. Japan even presents the belief that words have power, that everything in this world, even words and colors, can be inhabited by a heart, a soul, or a god. There was an ancient Shinto tradition of purifying oneself by washing off any dirt before presenting oneself before a god. We continue this tradition today in the form of bathing. I think that there is no other country in the world where people bathe as much as Japan. Such customs may

be unconsciously linked to culture and lessons handed down from the past. **Nakagami:** You surprised me with how knowledgeable you all are. Hearing you speak of your passions reminded me of a book about Kenichi Kato, editor of an old manga magazine. It is a critical biography of Kato, who published a manga magazine based on the belief that manga was beneficial to the development of youths. This magazine was published as a family business, and it started the tradition that would become the Japanese manga of today. In a now famous apartment building in Tokyo, he provided then popular manga artist Osamu Tezuka an apartment to work out of and housed various manga artists who had not yet found an audience. This building was a place where a wide variety of talent was cultivated. What I want to say is that even something like manga, which is now a major cultural cornerstone loved around the world, started from the passion, the love, of a single editor. Whether it be anime, cosplay, RC cars, *yokai*, or something else, when one's passion spreads, the result will be more people around the world becoming happy.

