



Interview: Housekeeping services in the light of women's empowerment and foreign human resource employment (Summary)

Kisun Yoo
CEO, Chez Vous Co., Ltd.

New system for housekeeping services

The Japanese government's Japan Revitalization Strategy 2015 named the promotion of women and foreign human resources as two of its pillars. Foreign housekeepers play a role in achieving both of these goals.

Launching of new system

In July 2015, amendments to the national strategic special zone and the structural reform special zone were enacted, allowing entrance and residence of foreigners hired as housekeepers by housekeeping service providers. As of November 2015, Kanagawa and Osaka prefectures have been designated the first Tokyo area and Kansai area special zones.

What are housekeeping services?

Housekeeping services refer to partial or full assistance in daily domestic chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping, and babysitting.

Progress accompanying globalization

Globally, many workers are trying to fully exploit their life potential by building their careers without compromising family life. For Japan to catch up with the global standard, the solution to this problem can be a breakthrough: we will be able to survive our aging demographic while maintaining our traditions.

Visit to a housekeeping service provider

I visited Mr. Kisun Yoo, CEO of Chez Vous Co., Ltd., at his office. Chez Vous is a Japanese housekeeping service company known for its comprehensive housemaid service, exploring a new field in this sector. Unlike the standard service programs of its major competitors, Chez Vous offers flexible, customized services to tend to its clients' needs. One of Mr. Yoo's objectives is for his entire staff to sense their clients' wishes in every circumstance, accumulating information and improving their skills by continuously asking themselves "What does my client want me to do?"

Current situation and future prospects for housekeeping business (interview with Mr. Yoo)

— How is Chez Vous's business today?

– We now have headquarters in Akasaka, Tokyo, and a branch in Yokohama. Our main business is housekeeping, and we also offer babysitting, house cleaning and full-time placement services. We currently have approximately 230 staff, 100 foreigners and 130 Japanese. More than 90% of our foreign workers are Philippine, either with Japanese spouses or as permanent residents without work restrictions. About two thirds are housekeepers.

— How do housekeeping services benefit your clients?

– Our clients save time for themselves by outsourcing their housework. As the majority of our clients are double-income families, I feel we are contributing to women's empowerment.

— What is the demography of your clients?

– About half of our clientele are foreigners. In most cases, our clients are busy workers in their thirties and forties with an annual family income above 10 million yen. We also have super-wealthy Japanese and foreign clients.

— What is the strength and uniqueness of Chez Vous compared to your competitors?

– Our strength lies in our flexible, high-quality service. While most of our rivals limit their services to standardized tidying and maintenance, we offer services finely tuned to the individual client's needs. These include all types of domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping, and babysitting. Our high-end clients place us in a unique position in the industry, where others target the middle market. Another strength is our abundance of English-speaking staff, which is one reason we are frequently contacted by families of foreign businessmen living in Japan. There are few companies catering to such needs.



— How do you develop human resources who meet the needs of your upper-class clients?

– We convey our standards in manners and practical skills as well as our service policies to all new staff. Our principle is that everyone shares our focus on capturing what our clients want us to do.

— What is the difference between foreign and Japanese staff?

– The most significant difference is that our foreign staff speak fluent English, an essential skill when working for foreign clients. Most of our Philippine staff have very high housekeeping skills and work efficiently. I think that such skills are developed while growing up in big families and handling a great deal of housework since childhood. The quality of Philippine housekeepers is world-famous.

— What is your future business perspective?

– We want to extend our services to the Japanese middle market: double-income families, busy singles and couples. We will continue to study housekeeping services and innovate in this field.

Future housekeeping services required in Japan

The importance of foreign human resources in the housekeeping sector will increase in the future, in terms of both women's empowerment and opening the door to foreign human resources. In order for Tokyo to develop into a true cosmopolis and accommodate accomplished, wealthy foreign residents, housekeeping services in foreign languages are part of an essential infrastructure. I will continue to closely observe private companies strongly influential in this field like Chez Vous, as well as future developments in Kanagawa and Osaka.



Profile:

Kisun Yoo

Chief Executive Officer of Chez Vous Co., Ltd.



Born in 1959 in Oita prefecture, Mr. Yoo studied development economics at Keio University in Tokyo and worked for HSBC Tokyo and London. Following a successful career in finance, he established, Chez Vous in 2004.

Chez Vous Co., Ltd.

Founded in January, 2004.

Headquarters: 7-1-15-9F, Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Business: Housekeeping, babysitting, house cleaning, school business, full-time housekeeper placement

Number of domestic staff: 230

<http://www.chezvous.co.jp>

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