

What are the essential skills Japanese and Americans will need to succeed as social innovators in the 21st century? How can new models that blend social innovation with business entrepreneurship maximize positive impact on both the bottom line and on society? How do qualities like joy and empathy enhance creativity and foster collaboration? These were just some of the many questions explored at Japan Society's second U.S.-Japan Innovators retreat, held at International House in Tokyo, January 19-21. Called *(IN)SIGHT: Bridging Gaps*, the retreat convened 28 Japanese and American business innovators, social entrepreneurs, architects, artists and other thought leaders to explore collaboration in a range of issues affecting our societies. The retreat was followed by a related symposium at Keio University focusing on new directions in social innovation in Japan and the United States.

The Tokyo retreat had three main goals:

- Develop “roadmaps” for two concrete projects Japan Society could pursue with the group over the next 12 to 18 months.
- Generate new ideas that might be further developed in the longer term.
- Create an environment that inspired participants to collaborate among themselves and generate ideas that could be pursued independently of direct Japan Society participation.

Included among those at the retreat were:

- **Rosanne Haggerty**, Found and President of Common Ground Community, a New York City-based nonprofit organization dedicated to ending homelessness;
- **Kensuke Onishi**, Founder, Peace Winds, a Japanese non-profit working on international refugee and reconstruction projects;
- **Ken Shibusawa**, President, Shibusawa & Co., a consulting firm specializing in alternative investments;
- **Cameron Sinclair**, Founder, Architecture for Humanity, a charitable organization founded in 1999 to promote architectural and design solutions to global, social and humanitarian crises

The retreat was divided into five areas consisting of three work sessions book-ended by two areas designated as stimulus sessions:

- Opening Stimulus - The Joy Factor: The Role of Joy in the Creative Process
- Work Session 1 - Essential Skills for Innovators: Improvisation, Business Acumen, Storytelling & Scaling
- Work Session 2 - Building Communities for Sustainability
- Work Session 3 - New Paths to Funding Community Innovation
- Closing Stimulus - Slow Aging: The Human Condition in our Communities

Each work and stimulus session had participants presenting his or her ideas, challenges, and/or successes on the subject matter at hand, followed by extensive dialogue among all the participants. Following each work session Japan Society divided participants into Roadmap Breakout groups. The Breakout groups worked together to identify critical unmet needs and made recommendations for addressing those needs.

An opening ice breaker session asked participants to envision what life will be like in 2037, and to create personalized visions. One striking element of the exercise was that everyone had positive visions of the future.

Moreover, a jazz trio featuring Marty Ashby and two young and talented Japanese musicians, Iwao Masuhara playing bass and Masanori Ando playing drums, delighted us with a number of jazz pieces during lunch on the last day of the retreat. The trio used the musical pieces to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between improvisation—swinging together despite having never played together before—and innovation.

The results of the retreat were very exciting, and there are a number of promising conversations continuing at once. Japan Society will implement the following:

- Japan Society will host a closed mini-retreat of selected Project innovators on May 23-24, 2007, to begin the process of formalizing the Innovators Network. This core group of business and social innovators will help us improve outreach to a larger pool of participants, find ways to leverage of outcomes through technology, the media and new partnerships to a broader audience, as well as build a long-term frame work for sustaining the momentum we've built over the last two years.
- On May 24, 2007, we will organize a public symposium, *Improvisation, Creativity, Collaboration: Fueling Innovation in the 21st Century*, that will bring some of the ideas explored in the Innovators retreats to a broader audience.
- Japan Society will be partnering with Grammy Award-winning producer and musician Marty Ashby to collaborate on an MCG Jazz project called *Jazz is Life*. This project will bring Japanese and American jazz musicians together, along with individuals from the Innovators Project, in a series of public dialogues that will take place along side jazz concerts around the country.

In addition to Japan Society activities, a number of members from the Innovators Network who attended the retreat are working with each other as a result of the retreat. One discussion that has already made significant progress brings together Kohei Nishiyama, CEO of elephant design, Dervalia Hanley from Stone-Yamashita Partners, and Cameron Sinclair, founder of Architects for Humanity. They are in discussion with a couple of beverage companies on an idea that would use beverage vending machines to

support non-profits. Spend 120 yen on a can of coffee, and 100 yen goes to the company, and the other 20 yen goes into help fund disaster assistance, homeless, housing, poverty, or the environment.

Other notable ideas from the retreat include:

- Creating a “Catalogue for Social Good.” Instead of a duty free catalogue in an airplane seatback pocket, a consortium of non-profits would create a catalogue for giving to different non-profit causes. Would airlines be willing to give donors frequent flier miles as an incentive?
- Create value for social entrepreneurship, particularly in Japan where social entrepreneurship is just beginning to take off. One idea was to develop something similar to the “Got Milk” campaign, but for social entrepreneurs.
- To help facilitate rapid intervention when communities are faced with a disaster, develop models of responses that have been particularly effective elsewhere, and make it available to others before a disaster hits. Communities could adapt the model to their local needs, and need not start from scratch or waste precious time re-inventing the wheel.

Visit the Innovators Project website: <http://innovators.japansociety.org/>