

I Want to Create New Value and Nurture It until It Becomes Commonplace in Society



Yoshiaki Maeda
Senior Executive Vice President,
NTT DOCOMO

Abstract

On January 1, 2022, NTT Communications and NTT COMWARE became subsidiaries of NTT DOCOMO, starting the new DOCOMO Group. Under the brand slogan, “Changing Worlds with You,” the new DOCOMO Group is working together with its customers and partners to create innovations and bring changes to society. We interviewed Yoshiaki Maeda, senior executive vice president of NTT DOCOMO, about strategies of the group’s smart life business and his attitude toward work.

Keywords: smart life business, social OS, purpose and values

The growth strategies of the new DOCOMO Group and its smart life business

—Congratulations on your appointment as senior executive vice president. First, could you tell us about the management condition and strategies of the new DOCOMO Group?

Thank you very much. As senior executive vice president, my responsibilities have greatly expanded in addition to those of my previous position as executive general manager of the Marketing Platform Division. Since assuming my new position, my passion for resolving social issues has been increasing, which is energizing me.

On January 1, 2022, NTT Communications and NTT COMWARE became subsidiaries of NTT DOCOMO, forming the new DOCOMO Group. On July 1, 2022, NTT DOCOMO celebrated its 30th year in business. In this milestone year, the new DOCOMO Group integrated enterprise and consumer businesses

of the three companies according to function and has made a full-fledged start with the following three segments as pillars of its business. Focusing on mobile-phone services and expanding new services such as fifth-generation mobile communications system (5G) and 5G SA (stand-alone network), (i) the telecommunications business involves reforming sales channels and network structures; (ii) the smart life business aims to increase revenue by more than 120-billion yen year-on-year by accelerating business growth in areas such as finance, payments, and video/entertainment; and (iii) the enterprise business aims to increase revenue by 55-billion yen year-on-year by renovating our portfolio with new services, including the expansion of cloud solutions and by providing one-stop services that integrate mobile, fixed-line, and cloud services. I’m in charge of the smart life business.

NTT DOCOMO launched its 5G services in March 2020, and has been working on implementing 6G. The implementation of 6G is one of the key project

themes concerning the NTT Group's Innovative Optical and Wireless Network (IOWN), and we are aiming to fuse 6G and IOWN technologies under the title "5G Evolution & 6G powered by IOWN." In the "DOCOMO 6G White Paper," we reported that we have developed a platform for enabling human augmentation, which is a new value we will be offering in the 6G era to enhance human senses through networks. This is the world's first platform for human augmentation.

In accordance with NTT Group's environmental and energy vision "NTT Green Innovation toward 2040," NTT DOCOMO has positioned sustainability at the center of its management. Recognizing that tackling climate change is an important corporate issue, we are working to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from our business activities to zero by 2030. We joined the Science Based Target initiative (SBTi), which aims to limit global temperature rise above pre-industrial levels to 1.5°C, in February 2022. We will promote faster communications and power saving by developing technologies that contribute to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions in next-generation networks and information-processing infrastructure. We will also increase the renewable-energy use ratio of electricity consumed by our business activities to 100%, including the purchase of non-fossil fuels certificates designated as renewable energy.

—What initiatives will be undertaken in the smart life business?

We have introduced an in-house company system and established the Smart Life Company. An in-house company system is an approach to corporate management that treats divisions within a company as independent companies. By increasing the independence of our smart life business, we can make speedy decisions on agile investment and hiring and training professional human resources, which will drive the evolution of our society at an accelerated pace. At the Smart Life Company, we hope to create new value for our customers by connecting multiple partners, delivering that value, and nurturing it until it becomes commonplace in society.

We will first refine the core assets of NTT DOCOMO. For example, our points-based customer loyalty program, "d POINT CLUB," has approximately 90.4-million members. It is by far the largest program of its kind in Japan. That fact should indicate our reliability and stability. What's more, approxi-



mately 590,000 partner companies have been nurtured through d POINTs and financial settlements, and the number of d POINT-participating stores has reached 750. We also possess data and technologies such as profiling AI (artificial intelligence), Mobile Spatial Statistics (population statistics using mobile network data), and authentication infrastructure that form the foundation of our various services.

By polishing up these core assets of NTT DOCOMO which support the growth of the marketing domains of our partner companies, we will build a foundation for promoting co-creation and alliances with partner companies, create and provide a group of services that will enrich society, and grow together with our partner companies. In other words, I believe that this is an effort to convert a customer base into a social operating system (OS) to build a platform for transforming society as well as individual lives. This effort involves not only finance, which is our strength, but also other fields that we want to grow and expand, e.g., medical and healthcare, energy, and urban development. In the future, we want to construct a social OS that can provide value from the entire NTT Group in a one-stop-shop manner by using individual identifiers.

I'm with NTT DOCOMO over 20 years and still enjoy working here, never get tired of it

—The idea of constructing a social OS shows the spirit of NTT DOCOMO.

At the Smart Life Company, when we set our goal to work for the betterment of society, we rethought our reason to exist, i.e., our purpose, and our values. We believed that by clarifying and sharing our purpose and values, we could promote corporate growth and move in a positive direction. While we were making these decisions, we kept thinking “who we are and what are we for?” Therefore, we traced our history back to the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation, which was one of the former “three public corporations and five government enterprises” in Japan, and we concluded that our origins lie in the desire to improve Japan during that era. We also reaffirmed that we have always been passionate about making communications and connections between people as well as social evolution a commonplace.

As exemplified by our i-mode (mobile Internet service), by using computing and networks like two wheels of a bicycle, NTT DOCOMO has been a pioneer in providing new value for about 20 years. Across Japan, many people rely on the infrastructure that we provide, and we take pride in our responsibil-



ity and capability to provide it. Judging from these achievements, I believe that we have continued to embody “social-value creation.” When we launched the Smart Life Company, we clearly stated our purpose is “to connect and nurture until it becomes the commonplace of tomorrow.” In accordance with that purpose, we will continue to create and nurture new value in Japan and around the world in the same fashion as we have been doing in cooperation with our partner companies.

We also herald the three values that should be shared to fulfill our purpose, i.e., “There is no end to the pursuit of providing better value,” “Think big, act fast,” and “The growth of society begins with the growth of oneself.” Although there may be days of hardship in the midst of competition, I want to keep challenging myself and remain unwavering to achieve personal growth.

—Your company’s purpose and values give us hope for a bright future. How did you develop your powerful and positive attitude?

I feel that the experiences I have had since I started working, and the impact they have had on me have made me the person I am today. When I decided to move from Recruit Holdings to NTT DOCOMO about 20 years ago, my colleagues at the time worried about me saying, “Are you going to be okay?” Despite their worries, I was excited about working for NTT DOCOMO. The reason for my enthusiasm was the fact that at that time NTT DOCOMO had already provided services to tens of millions of customers and had the dynamism to listen to responses from them. At the same time, my mentor, Takeshi Natsuno, the creator of i-mode, often said, “What are you doing this job for? I do this job to make society more convenient, enjoyable, and affluent.” I felt a great deal of empathy for his words, and I was proud of what I was doing when I first joined the company. From that time on, I myself had a strong desire to realize that my life was changing and becoming more interesting.

It’s been more than 20 years since I started working at NTT DOCOMO, and I’ve never gotten tired of my work. Over the last 20 years, the world has undergone various evolutions, and each time we have been involved in those evolutions, we have also evolved while creating new things. I feel strongly that I have been able to grow and develop myself as NTT DOCOMO has been evolving and receiving attention from society. It has been an opportunity given to me by NTT DOCOMO for which I am grateful. That’s



why I want us to be the kind of company that makes people think, “Wow, DOCOMO!”

Never do things by halves

—I can feel your love for NTT DOCOMO and your passion for your work. Can you tell us what is important to you in your work?

It is said that people who change the world are outsiders, young people, and idiots, and when I joined NTT DOCOMO, I was assigned to a department to which many people had moved in from other companies. Of course, there were also people who had been with NTT DOCOMO and they communicated well with me, and I feel that the trust we built while working together is rock-solid. Based on these experiences, I have two key points I want to emphasize as a top executive. First, I want to run a business that makes everyone who works in it can feel positive possibilities. I want to and must operate the business and practice management that can embody the ideal image of NTT DOCOMO in terms of what sort of presence we can continue to have in society. Second, to manifest the first point, I want all our employees to take responsibility and have the initiative to carry through their work. I myself will always try to communicate with them so that everyone thinks in that way.

Again, for the reasons mentioned above, our purpose and the values to be shared are put in writing. For example, we have listed a series of important

messages we want to communicate, such as always having a deep understanding of our customers, focusing on the value for each customer and partner, and meeting everyone’s expectations with sincerity and integrity. These messages emphasize the importance of our approach of “Never do things by halves.”

There will be many times when you are working that you will think, “That’s about right.” However, at that moment, your growth stops. I believe that those who are willing to go the extra mile will drive society and ultimately be the winners. In fact, I’m still in the process of growing, and it is difficult to stay motivated all the time. Even so, I’m inspired by those written messages that I keep on my desk. I haven’t felt this enthusiasm for a long time.

—I’m sure that your employees also feel their enthusiasm. How does research and development play a role in embodying such enthusiasm?

I have high expectations for research and development. The construction of a social OS using our core assets can be done through the culmination of the wisdom of everyone in research and development. The final form of this system is a social OS that can provide all NTT Group services. I look forward to taking on the challenge of flexibly and promptly addressing the needs of our partners while keeping abreast of social trends by harnessing our assets, namely, the communications technology that supports the network, devices connected to the network, and applications that run on those devices.

I also want us to develop technologies that can provide interesting and enjoyable experiences and worldviews, which mainly concern the entertainment field. I want to use such technologies to create new services in collaboration with our partner companies. Incidentally, Japan's first "smart arena," scheduled to open in Aichi Prefecture in the summer of 2025, is a challenge to create an unprecedented experience of entertainment by introducing cutting-edge technologies. As well as making customers happy in that arena, I want to link that service to new business. Thus, let's do our best to create impactful, sensational, and dramatic experiences.

■ Interviewee profile

Yoshiaki Maeda joined NTT DOCOMO, Inc. in 2000. He became director of the Consumer Services Department in 2008, senior vice president and general manager of the Platform Business Department in 2017, and executive vice president and executive general manager of the Marketing Platform Division in 2020. He has been in his current position since June 2022.