

New Approach to Create New Technologies and New Products



*Toshiaki Tsuge**

Since establishing the business of the copper and the wire cables in 1884, the Furukawa Electric Group (The Group) has been generating a variety of technologies and products in response to the needs of the times. The Group has been engaged in the corporate activities with the basic philosophy of “Drawing on more than a century of expertise in the development and fabrication of advanced materials, we will contribute to the realization of a sustainable society through continuous technological innovation”.

The technologies that started from the copper refining and wire cables have been expanding in wide range of fields, and currently, by adding the high frequency electronics technology to the material strength know-how developed since the day of the establishment. We have 4 core technologies, “Metal”, Polymer”, “Photonics” and “High Frequency”.

In the research and development based on these technologies, we are aiming “To develop new products in the focused fields of the infrastructure and the automobile components” and “To create a new business which solves social issues”. In recent years, we have been actively promoting actions to initiate innovations for the purpose of speeding up the new products development and accelerating the creation of new businesses. In 2016, we opened an open laboratory “FunLab” and have been implementing several measures.

With the publishing of the special issue “Challenges to New Technologies and New Products”, actions to initiate innovation are introduced in chronological order.

Many officials from the industry-academia-government field have visited FunLab established in Yokohama works in August 2016, and the total number of visitors exceeded

1,000 as of September 2018. This is a repercussion exceeding our expectation, therefore we are currently planning the expansion of the facility. It will be reborn as a newborn FunLab in September 2019.

In September 2017, Advanced Prototyping Center was established incorporating with the Marketing Division. As quick responses to customer’s voices, we are proceeding with our activities to create prototypes and to propose solutions. We are challenged to create new businesses originating from the customer’s underlying needs.

In February 2018, Social Cooperation Programs has been started with the University of Tokyo. Traditionally we have closely cooperated with the industry and the academia based on existing themes. Here, we are challenging the new open innovation way of cooperation with wide ranges of organizations without being constrained.

In May 2018, collaborative activities have been started with Accelerator Creww in order to strengthen the cooperation with venture companies. While realizing the essence of speed in venture companies, we are challenged to create businesses in new fields.

In August 2018, a research center named Silicon Valley Innovation Laboratories (SVIL) was newly established in Silicon Valley, USA. Global cooperation with venture companies and universities has been strengthened and we have been challenged to service new businesses from Silicon Valley.

As just described, we are challenging various open innovation measures. We are pleased to have discussions with anybody having interest in our activities. We are looking forward to be approached from you at the newborn FunLab.

* General Manager, Planning Department, R&D Division