

July 15, 2021

Z Holdings Corporation
Yahoo Japan Corporation
LINE Corporation
Ikyu Corporation
ASKUL Corporation
ZOZO Group

Z Holdings Establishes Z AI Academia to Develop AI Professionals with Dual Focus on Arts and Sciences

- **To promote knowledge sharing and business collaboration across group companies to solve the shortage of AI human resources**

Z Holdings Corporation (hereinafter “ZHD”) has established Z AI Academia, a community for training AI talents among group companies. Z AI Academia is part of Z Academia, a corporate university of the Z Holdings Group. Z AI Academia will initially be participated by the group’s core companies: Yahoo Japan Corporation, LINE Corporation, Ikyu Corporation, ASKUL Corporation and ZOZO Group, and will provide a place for AI professionals to gather and learn. Through such a forum, Z AI Academia will promote knowledge sharing and AI-based business collaboration within the Group, and focus on developing diverse AI professionals in both the humanities and sciences, including not only researchers and engineers, but also product managers and producers who will use AI.

To grow each business with a focus on AI, the ZHD Group plans to invest JPY 500 billion and to increase the number of engineers involved in AI applications in Japan and overseas by 5,000 over the next 5 years. According to a survey announced by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry^{*1}, it is estimated that the shortage of AI human resources in Japan will expand to 88,000 by 2025 and 124,000 by 2030. Under such circumstances, ZHD will encourage the revitalization of human resources not only through external recruitment, but also from within the group by exchanging and developing human resources.

Z AI Academia will first establish an AI Case Study Committee, which will aim to improve the knowledge of participants through classroom lectures that introduce algorithms of AI technology and examples of its utilization in business, as well as workshops and gatherings for the group’s human resources. In addition to researchers and engineers, ZHD will also focus on developing AI professionals from non-engineers and humanities graduates, defining “AI professionals” as a wide range of occupations that will benefit from AI knowledge in their future work and skill development. In addition, Z AI Academia will actively provide learning opportunities and community building for employees and contract workers of not only the initial core companies but also of all the ZHD Group companies.

ZHD aims to become a world-leading AI tech company from Japan and Asia by raising the level of knowledge and practical skills related to AI and developing human resources across the entire group, while facing the social issue of AI human resource shortage.

^{*1} Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry “Survey on IT Human Resources Demand”

https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/it_policy/jinzai/houkokusyo.pdf (Japanese only)

■ Yoichi ITO, Z Academia President

Z Academia was launched as an in-house university to connect the ties among the group companies of the Z Holdings Group. Our goal is not only to provide training, but also to become a base camp where people from various companies can gather, interact, and discuss.

We are now pleased to announce the launch of Z AI Academia within Z Academia, which will specialize in AI human resources.

Shortage of AI human resources is not a problem of the Z Holdings Group alone, but is one of the challenges facing Japan today. And AI knowledge is no longer just for engineers; it has become a basic skill that everyone should learn and acquire to make the most of AI. Z AI Academia will start with the group's employees and provide a forum for everyone to discuss how they should acquire and then use these new basic skills.

■ Comments from the board members of Z AI Academia

- Ryuji NOGUCHI, VP of AI driven business, ZOZO Technologies, Inc. (Z AI Academia, Executive Secretary)

Z AI Academia is launched as a place for AI professionals and prospective AI professionals to gather and learn together. The development and nurturing of AI talents is imperative in order for ZHD to become a true AI tech company. Z AI Academia will create a practical learning environment where all employees of the ZHD Group, whether with an arts or sciences background, or regardless of his/her current job type, can become AI professionals.

We will expand the circle of peers who learn together in the ZHD Group, and under the cooperative structure created as a result, accelerate AI implementation to the society, and work to enhance the Group's services.

- Akira TAJIMA, Head of Yahoo! JAPAN Research, Yahoo Japan Corporation

In the course of promoting the use of AI in services through R&D, I have come to realize that although it is difficult to come up with ideas from 0 to 1 in busy workplaces, many people are good at associating "if we can do that, maybe we can do this." Through Z AI Academia, I will contribute to the exchange of case studies and human resources, and to the fostering of the practical ability to give shape to the ideas that are generated.

- Hiroki TANIGUCHI, CDO (Chief Data Officer), Yahoo Japan Corporation

It am delighted to be a part of this activity at the Z Holdings Group, which is well-equipped with data, human resources, and diverse businesses necessary to deliver the value of AI to the world. It would be a great pleasure to be able to play a role in not only developing human resources within the Group, but also in setting an example to the world at large.

- Shinichiro ISAGO, Executive Officer, AI Company Company CEO, LINE Corporation

In addition to the use of AI technology in services such as LINE app and various other LINE services, our AI technology brand "LINE CLOVA" aims to create the future of the ordinary with a more natural user experience through AI technology and services.

We will share and mutually enhance our expertise in the research and development of advanced technologies, such as ultra-large language models specialized for the Japanese language, development of data platform which serves as the basis of AI technology, as well as in the

recruitment and training of global AI personnel who can use AI technologies to develop and commercialize services. Through this, we will contribute to making ZHD a true AI tech company.

- Jun SAKAKI, President and CEO, Ikyu Corporation

The use of AI is essential to the business growth of Ikyu Corporation. Increasing the number of people with AI knowledge within the company will increase the growth opportunities for the company and its business. It will also help to expand the scope of the person's own work and provide more opportunities for challenges. We hope that through our efforts at Z AI Acadmia, we can contribute to increasing such opportunities.

- Noritomo MIYAZAWA, Executive Officer, CDXO (Chief Digital Transformation Officer), ASKUL Corporation

ASKUL Corporation possesses data from all the processes in the e-commerce business, including the website, logistics centers, and delivery. And as a pioneer in the e-commerce field, it has taken a unique path of evolution leveraging huge volumes of data and technology.

ASKUL Corporation will provide this knowledge to Z AI Academia. By bringing the AI development and utilization know-how of the five companies together, we believe that we will be able to create collective wisdom and bring the evolution of each company to a higher level.

The Academia will play a major role as a place for DX human resources (personnel who have a command of data, AI, and other technologies) to learn, which will be important in the future evolution. In addition, rather than the companies acting on their own, the Academia will unite as a team to overcome the barriers that will appear in front of us in the process of evolution, and will strongly promote digital transformation.

■ Outline of Z AI Academia

- Date of inauguration: July 15, 2021
- Operating companies: Yahoo Japan Corporation, LINE Corporation, Ikyu Corporation, ASKUL Corporation, ZOZO Group.
- Participating companies: Group companies of the Z Holdings Group
- Participants: All employees and contract employees of the Z Holdings Group (approx. 23,000)
- Sample programs (excerpt) (plan):

Date	Program
August/September 2021	Open study group① Basic course to become a master of AI
August/September 2021	Z AI Academy kick off meeting AI Talent Online Networking Meeting①
October 2021	Open study group② Case study
January 2022	Open study group③ Case study
January 2022	Z AI Academia AI Talent Online Networking Meeting②
February 2022	For ZHD Group AI Online Workshop①
March 2022	For ZHD Group AI Online Workshop②

※Times and programs are subject to change

■ Outline of Z Academia

Z Academia was established in April 2020 as a corporate university of the Z Holdings Group geared

towards the employees of the Group. This is an extension of the Yahoo! JAPAN Academia, which is a corporate university of Yahoo Japan Corporation, provided for the employees of the Yahoo Japan Group.

Z Academia was established to create a cross-sectoral connection of the employees of the Z Holdings Group so that they can assume the roles of accelerating synergies among the Group. It aims to become a base camp where the employees of group companies can share the perception of creating the future together, aligning the road they should be following, and learning together.

In addition to a course participated by the top leaders, the Academia offers programs that can be participated by any employee of the group companies. Since fiscal 2019, a course for female leaders (a course initially offered by as Yahoo! JAPAN Academia) has also been conducted. In fiscal 2021, we also launched a certified instructor system where employees can serve as instructors to create a place for employees to learn from each other.

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