

Aiming to Utilize the Avatar Technology Close at Hand



**RKB MAINICHI
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RKB Mainichi Broadcasting's Activities

RKB stands for Radio Kyushu Broadcasting, and it originally started as an AM radio station. This station is now part of the Tokyo Broadcasting System network, and it broadcasts television and radio programs to about 7 million people mainly around the Fukuoka area.

As AI and VR have become buzzwords in recent years, the latest technology no longer feels like a distant concept. We wanted to show our audience how technology is evolving, so we began broadcasting our "EnterTech: The Unexplored Digital World" late-night program, which airs every Wednesday at 12:55 a.m. THK's "Shiorin" appears on our program, and we introduce the current state and future prospects of avatar technology.

For example, avatars could be used to go shopping by people who have circumstances preventing them from leaving their house, bring scenery of far-off destinations to us from the comfort of our homes, or contribute to the evolution of telecommuting, which is already expanding rapidly. However, for those of us in the press, on-the-ground reporting is an indispensable part of our work, even if it means going to the scene of a disaster or an area of conflict. If we can make use of robot-enabled avatar technology in those life-threatening situations, the robot can be remotely controlled and act as a veritable stand-in for the reporter. We see this as something that brings forth possibilities that could dramatically affect Japan's work-style revolution.

Shiorin Demonstrates the Height of THK's Robot Technology

We visited many trade shows to look for a robot that fit the concept of our program. Then, in February 2019, we encountered THK's Shiorin at Events & Amusement Expo. The robot is made out of several actuators, but the components are smaller, and the finished body is shaped more delicately than other companies' robots. We were struck by how it seemed suited for television, since it can be operated remotely and does not have an overbearing presence when around people. The joints are skillfully designed, so it can nearly replicate the movements of a human hand. We

marveled at this robot fabrication technology that makes the users' desires a reality.

Every year, we hold a two-day RKB Radio Festival at the plaza in front of our company building, and we invited Shiorin to act as a reporter during the event. Deftly weaving through the crowds, Shiorin successfully carried out the important mission of performing its avatar functions and handing out promotional goods. Even though the program has a midnight time slot, many people are familiar with it, and it has a growing following.

I hope that THK will get even closer to replicating human-like movements. I would like to pursue the interesting possibilities for a new kind of society that uses avatar technology and lets us engage with our audience through a more personal lens.



Shiorin mid-interview

Becoming One Part of the Work-Style Revolution

Aiko Tagawa

Nagatsuka Business Unit, Business Development Department, Engineering Division, Industrial Machinery Headquarters



When I take my children to and from preschool, I sometimes hear people around me say they wish they could work remotely. I firmly believe that robots with precise remote controls can be part of the work-style revolution once we develop them. Through this effort to create a new society with RKB's avatar, I will put forth my best effort as a robot developer.