Kirin beer company toasts same-sex marriages for its employees

With same-sex partnerships now officially recognised in some parts of Japan, companies have made public announcements in support of greater LGBT rights and awareness within their corporations and in society in general. On the heels of Panasonic's announcement last year, beer and soft drinks giant Kirin Holdings, Ltd. has made a change to its guidelines to ensure there is no discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity, and to recognise employees’ same-sex marriages from this month. Common-law marriages will be similarly recognised.

Company rules regarding things like condolence leave, company housing, and assorted benefits will be rewritten so that common-law or same-sex couples receive them in the same way as their married colleagues currently do. Medical leave will also allow time off for procedures such as hormone therapy, which were previously not covered. They have also announced they will be holding workshops to raise awareness amongst employees and customers.

The Kirin craft beer subsidiary Spring Valley Brewery also supported this year's Tokyo Rainbow Pride event and had a booth there, with the rather catchy slogan that “both people and beers are all different, and are all good.”

While these are clearly positive changes and show a move in the right direction when it comes to equality, there is still a lot to be done. It’s fair to say that the support of large companies will go some way to influencing smaller companies and their workers' attitudes, although that may not create change as fast as some might like it.

While the LGBT community faces challenges all over the world, sometimes Japan appears to have more hurdles than many other developed countries, as this commercial shows, and so these announcements, and those of housing organisations like...