

## 7618 PC DEPOT Corporation

### Overhauling toward the Subscription-based Business Model Focused on Premium Members

June 21, 2021

First section of Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE)

#### Key Points

- In May, the Company announced that it would completely shift to a unique subscription model. It has already spent 10 years shifting to the membership business and, in these several years, has been shifting to a business focusing on premium members. Eventually, it will shift to a model focusing on NCS (new customer success members).
- The Company has 450,000 subscription members in a broad sense (ARPU of 3,500 yen), from which it aims to increase the number of premium members (NCS), to whom Digital Consultants will be assigned, from the current 97,000 to 140,000 in one year. As the system is ready, the Company will make a large up-front investment in the current term to increase and enhance human resources and expand advertising.
- The burden of this investment will result in a profit decline in the current term, but the increase in NCS will get on track from the next term. Subscriptions already account for 50% of sales and are planned to be increased by up to 80% in three to five years. The Company has been shifting to an active approach since the second half of the previous term, whereby it increased hiring and accepted 400 employees loaned from HIS. It uses TV commercials for advertising to promote the "Digital Consultant." Its unique vehicle stores (Connected Mobile Store) will appear from this summer.
- The number of premium members has started to increase. The business model to support home digital life in a planned manner is proving to be effective. The Company will pursue LTV (lifetime value) under the vision of "eliminating the digital divide" and the mission of "bringing Digital Consultants to all homes." PC DEPOT advises customers on any topic, including teleworking from home, online learning, and remote communications.
- Three to five Digital Consultants, who are in charge of digital life plan consulting, will form a team (called Works) in order to collectively develop the future digital lives of customers (families) who are premium members. The demand creation effect of this proposal-based consultation is expected to materialize gradually.
- The shift to a new business model is advanced and innovative, and is unique even by international standards. With new members increasing, the Company's business will become more profitable than before. For the coming five years, the NCS will significantly increase, resulting in a steady growth of income from subscriptions, whereby the Company will be highly regarded in the market.

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Company rating: A

Stock price (June 18, 2021): 429 yen

Market capitalization: 22.6 billion yen (52.622 million shares)

PBR 0.82

ROE 5.3%

PER 15.3

Dividend yield: 3.3%

(Figures are in millions of yen)

Fiscal yearend	Sales	Operating	Ordinary	Net	EPS	Dividend
Mar. 2013	51359	867	924	441	11.2	3.9
Mar. 2014	53772	2256	2357	1536	38.0	4.7
Mar. 2015	51261	3045	3162	1914	42.0	6.9
Mar. 2016	51729	4086	4139	2693	56.9	9.6
Mar. 2017	46417	3402	3467	2269	44.1	13.0
Mar. 2018	43590	2981	3079	1958	38.6	13.0
Mar. 2019	40447	2579	2685	1553	30.9	13.0
Mar. 2020	39137	2941	3018	1718	34.2	13.0
Mar. 2021	38312	2893	2935	1854	36.8	13.5
Mar. 2022 (forecast)	39100	2050	2100	1410	28.0	14.0
Mar. 2023 (forecast)	40500	2500	2550	1700	33.7	15.0

(2021.3 base)

Total assets: 37,224 million yen

Net assets: 26,518 million yen

Equity ratio: 71.1%

BPS: 524.6 yen

NOTE: ROE, PER and dividend yield are based on the most recent forecast. In October 2013, the Company carried out a share split at a ratio of 1:100, in January 2015, a share split at a ratio of 1:1.5 and in October 2016, a share split at a ratio of 1:1.2. The EPS and dividends for the preceding terms have been revised accordingly.

Analysis by: Yukio Suzuki

(Chief Analyst, Belle Investment Research of Japan)

Definition of Company rating: Qualitative evaluation based on criteria such as 1) management capabilities; 2) abilities to grow the business; 3) risk management with respect to downward forecast revision, 4) sustainability from the ESG perspective.

The Company is expressed as a four-level rating where "A" means good, "B" means some degree of improvement is required, "C" means considerable improvement is required, and "D" means the state of the company is extremely grave.

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## 1. New business model: Complete shift to unique subscription model

### Aiming to be a customer success company

PC DEPOT aims to be a customer success company. Its mission is to be the "Digital Consultant for all families" by assigning one Digital Consultant to each household to support the customers' digital life.

PC DEPOT internally refers to a fulfilling digital life as "*ikka ryoran*" which means that a family can enjoy its digital life in various ways, with an image of *hyakka ryoran*, i.e. hundred flowers blooming in profusion.

### Target to pursue LTV (lifetime value)

The Company has redefined its corporate target as focusing on LTV. The LTV (lifetime value) means enhancing the customers' long-term value and is measured by the formula: LTV = Increasing subscriptions (increasing monthly-fee members) x increasing period of duration.

New Business Model of PC DEPOT		
–LTV (life time value)-based unique subscription model–		
Target Improve the LTV of NCS (new customer success members)		
Increase in NCS x Prolongation of continuous period		
KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of NCS subscription members</li> <li>• ARPU (average monthly sales per member)</li> <li>• CRR (monthly continuation rate of subscription members)</li> <li>• ARR (annual sales of subscription members)</li> </ul>	
Near-term target		
	Mar. 2021	→ Mar. 2022 (about 1 year later)
Number of NCS members (ten thousand)	9.7	14.0
ARPU (yen/month)	8053	8100
CRR (%/month)	99.6	99.6
APP (100 m yen/year)	94	130

### From premium members to NCS (New Customer Success) members – New Definition

The subscriptions by premium members, etc. already account for 50% of sales and the Company has a policy to increase it to 80%. Currently, PC DEPOT broadly has 450,000 members, from which it will focus on increasing NCS customers, who have a high persistence rate of 10 years or more. To this end, it will concentrate on investment in 1) in-house education (human resources), 2) store

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facilities and 3) advertising.

Subscription members mean members using flat-rate services, who are mainly premium members, and other members using cloud services (excluding members of Internet-related businesses). The NCS (New Customer Success) members mean subscription members to whose households the Company's Digital Consultants are assigned and who are expected to be scaled up continuously in the future.

Contents of the subscription-based services include the use of: 1) the Company's unique (patented) Wi-Fi system; 2) service recurring integration system, which batch manages multiple service procedures; 3) full data backup cloud, which enables customers to "Just Show up and Buy a New PC;" and 4) electronic books and other digital contents.

NCS plan menu		
Up to 4 family members	Up to 4 devices	5500 yen/month
	Up to 7 devices	7000 yen/month
Additional one member		+1500/month
Personal (individual person)	Up to 2 devices	4000 yen/month
	Up to 4 devices	5000 yen/month

#### **Announced the breakdown for the first time**

The results for the term ended March 2021 show that the sales of 38.3 billion yen consist of 19.9 billion yen in subscriptions (52% of the total sales), 2.6 billion yen in lump-sum purchases of goods by subscription members, 2.6 billion yen in one-shot technology (repair, etc.), 12 billion yen in sale of goods, and 1.2 billion yen in other sales.

The sales of solution services were 22.5 billion yen in total, consisting of 19.9 billion yen in subscriptions and 2.6 billion yen in lump-sum purchases of goods by subscription members.

The subscriptions overall show ARR (annual sales) of 20.1 billion yen with 450,000 members, ARPU (average monthly sales per member) of 3,500 yen, and CRR (monthly duration rate of members) of 99.1%. ARR is a figure obtained by multiplying MRR (monthly sales) in March by 12, which does not coincide with the actual sales amount for the fiscal year.

Of the above, the NCS achieved ARR (Average Recurring Revenue) of 9.4 billion yen, 97,000 members, ARPU of 8,053 yen/month and CRR (Customer Recurring Rate) of 99.6%.

The announcements of sales for solution services did not contain a detailed breakdown to date, but it has been disclosed this time.

#### **Near-term Target: 140,000 NCS members in approximately one year**

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Company has been preparing to shift to a new business model.

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As the target for the next year or so, it represents that it will increase the number of NCS members to 140,000 (from 97,000 as of the end of the previous term) and NCS's ARR to 13 billion yen (from 9.4 billion yen as of the end of the previous term) as soon as possible.

In the previous term, the number of NCS members was 97,000 (22% of all members) and NCS's ARR was 9.4 billion yen, which accounted for 47% of the ARR for subscriptions as a whole. In the current term, the Company aims to increase the number of NCS members to 140,000 (31% of all members) and NCS's ARR to 13 billion yen, that is, 55% of the ARR of 23.5 billion yen for subscriptions as a whole.

Among the 450,000 members, 97,000 persons (families) are NCS members to whom the Company's Digital Consultants are assigned. The Company will connect the Digital Consultants to 140,000 persons (up 43,000), including existing and new members.

The Company will use strategies to bring forward the one-year target as much as possible, but the target should take more or less that long to achieve. In the coming three years, the Company will focus on human resources, stores, and advertisement marketing, with an aim of 20 billion yen of NCS's ARR.

Future market opportunity

\* Number of households of two or more members in Japan: 34.31 million  
 → Number of households PC DEPOT can approach currently: 6 million

PC DEPOT	2021.3		2022.3		→	Number of NCS members		
	Subscription-related	NCS	Subscription-related	NCS		200,000	300,000	600,000
ARR (hundred million yen)	201	94	235	130		190	290	580
Number of members (ten thousand)	45	9.7	45	14		20	30	60
ARPU (yen/month)	3500	8053	4000	8100		8100	8100	8100

(Note) Estimation

### Structure of subscription members

Among the 450,000 members, approximately 100,000 are NCS core customers. Then, what types of customers are the remaining 350,000? They are subscription-based members but, from the viewpoint of stores, single-service users for anti-virus software, smartphones, storage and so on.

The Company assumes 140,000 as the next NCS target. It plans to cover half of these additional 40,000 or more from the existing 350,000 members and to untap the potential of the remaining half as new customers.

### Market is large

Among the NCS members defined by the Company (i.e. members to whose households the

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exclusive Digital Consultants are assigned), TAM (Total Addressable Market, i.e. the maximum number of members to whom the Company can reach) is assumed to be 34 million households. The potential market is large.

DX is prevailing in schools and workplaces and the Company will develop a DX environment in the family home and will render support to enable everyone to enjoy a digital life.

In the TAM, 34.31 million households require a Digital Consultant, while the Company currently has a potential market of 6 million households that it can approach, which constitutes 18% of the whole market.

Currently, the number of NCS is 100,000 but, if it increases to 200,000, 300,000 or 600,000, for example, the ARR will grow to 19 billion yen, 29 billion yen and 58 billion yen, respectively, even if the ARPU remains at 8,100 yen.

### Taking on the challenge at once

The Company has more than 10 years' experience with its membership system for digital services for families. During these three years, it has been reliably fostering and positioning the Digital Consultants for families by considering them as the core market. It acquired a trademark right for the Digital Life Planner and built a business base unsurpassed by others.

In the current term, the Company has taken on the challenge at once with its new subscription model. It redefined the business model and announced all new KPIs. This is innovative. The business model is based on the Company's past experiences and therefore is not discontinuous in evolution. The Company has made a leap after having prepared for it.

Digital consultant	
1 Works	: A team of 3–5 members
1 Works covers	: 500–800 households
500 Works (1500 to 2500 members)	: cover 250,000–400,000 households

### Implement three strategies

To acquire NCS members, the Company will implement three strategies. Firstly, to enhance human resources, the Company: 1) hired 139 employees in April (up 49% YoY) who were new graduates and internally promoted part-timers and casual staff; and 2) will accept up to 400 employees transferred by HIS to foster them as digital life planners. An increase of approximately 500 persons is a remarkable expansion, considering that the current number of personnel for the Works is 1,500.

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As the Works has already been implemented, there will be no problem in fostering human resources. For the HIS personnel, the president heads the implementation of the education system and every employee will become able to deal with the site independently in approximately one month and a half. Any shortfalls will be covered by the Works.

A Works, which consists of three members, will render support as a Digital Consultant. These will soon be increased to 500 teams and will be expanded thereafter as well.

Secondly, to enhance the store format, the Company will 1) remodel Smart Life Stores to change the basic format, 2) start trial operations of vehicle stores, and 3) develop small stores specialized in NCS. For opening new stores, small stores can be opened more easily than before as the Works grows.

Thirdly, to make advertisements, the Company will increase channels further from June in addition to TV commercials.

Literally, PC DEPOT will be a company that will draw success for its customers through digital utilization.

### **Full-scale marketing**

The Company will make advertisements to acquire customers on a full scale from June through the next year gradually. The purpose of the advertisements is not to announce bargains like superstores. It is required to attract customers effectively by promoting the benefits of becoming a premium member, such as enjoying their digital lives, experiencing greater convenience and comfort than before, and having any issues settled promptly.

It may take time to accumulate know-how. Ordinarily, the Company would offer a certain free trial period to enable customers to use its services and, if they like it, they will become paying members.

### **Effect of ARPU**

If the premium member families intend to use various digital devices, they may consult with the Digital Consultant to make their purchase plan instead of purchasing from mass home electronics retailers or mail-order shopping as they did before. The APRU will then rise from the current 8,000 yen level. If it rises sufficiently, the subscription price effect will have an effect on the income.

## **2. Characteristics: Migration to stores specializing in Internet device services**

### **Specializing in PC-related technical services, keeping the lead position in the industry**

PC DEPOT fully supports home digital life. The Company is strong in Japan's Kanto region and covers 90% of the population there. Consumers who want to make use of PC DEPOT support services

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will find there is a store within reasonable travel distance. Consumers who buy a desktop or notebook can have a Wi-Fi router set up for them at the store, and can start using their new computer as soon as they get home simply by plugging it in. This saves them from having to do the initial setup themselves. Smartphones also can connect to these Wi-Fi routers. If customers have a problem, they can contact someone in charge at a store (My Digital Consultant) and get immediate attention. Users can obtain all these services just by paying a monthly fee.

The Company leads the industry in PC repairs and maintenance services. Although the Company is a middle-standing company in the industry, in terms of the number of PCs sold, it has unique service characteristics. Over the last 10 years, PC DEPOT has dramatically shifted its business focus to services. The Company has been creating a unique presence among its competition with consumer electronics superstores. It has survived well against local competition as a computer specialist although it could not compete against major companies in terms of total sales volume. Under such circumstances, the Company did not overextend itself when opening new stores.

Trend in constituent ratios of sales accessories

	2009.3		2013.3	2017.3	2020.3	2021.3	
	Sales	Constituent ratios	Sales				
Goods sales	35572	82.4	69.0	43.4	38.3	37.8	14486
PC and peripherals	24375	58.5	46.4	23.5	20.9	23.3	8944
Accessories, supplies, and softw are	6554	14.6	12.1	6.7	5.5	6.4	2437
Used items and others	4643	9.3	10.5	14.2	11.8	8.1	3103
Service sales	11340	17.6	31.0	56.6	61.7	59.1	22622
Solution services	8726	10.3	27.3	53.7	58.4	58.9	22558
Royalties and other revenue (FC)	522	1.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	64
Internet-related businesses	2090	6.0	3.4	2.7	3.1	3.1	1203
Total	46912	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	38312

NOTE: Sales from solution services include sales of service inclusive products and technical services/fees.

It did decide however to become a customer-orientated IT solutions company, by striving to improve its services instead of increasing the sales volume for desktops, notebooks, and other hardware. The Company markedly changed its tack to follow this direction in 2005. This was the second turning point for the Company since it was founded.

Providing solutions in combination with various services is the key to success. Moreover, when members subscribe to the Company's premium services, they can get any support they need: maintenance, call-center services, anti-virus support, a "full installation" service when customers replace old PCs, instruction in how to use smartphones, and future digital life plan consultation.

One of the Company's strengths is this lineup of original services it has developed and runs. No

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other PC shop is capable of delivering technical services especially data recovery, as speedily as PC DEPOT. The Company set its transformation into a store that specializes in services as a part of its policy objectives and has strengthened its commitment to this policy as it entered the Internet era.

### **Unique business model with premium services as its source of income**

The Company's solution services consist of three service categories. The first is the PC Clinic which provides installations along with repair and replacement services. Support for solution services are provided at all stores and is managed by about 1,000 employees.

The second is premium services which solve problems customers are having. The services cover: (1) any type of product; (2) products regardless of how old they are; and (3) products purchased at the stores of other companies.

The third is solution services which combine communication or content with devices. By subscribing to these services, customers can read digital magazines on their iPad or connect with the printer wirelessly with a monthly payment.

Premium services backed up on the cloud (automatic data storage) provide sufficient capability to cope with defective hardware or security issues. This premium service is about to enter a new stage.

The Company's business model is quite unique, even when compared to companies outside of Japan. The model consists of product sales, service sales, its operation as an MVNO, and other areas. Members enter into a three to four-year premium service contract. The Company bears the cost of support up front, and then recovers it from the fees paid by members.

Customers want to use the PCs, tablets, or other devices they have bought as soon as they get home. If after buying a PC for example, a user takes three hours to do things such as create a recovery disc, set up anti-virus software, configure the initial settings and set a password, and if the customer then hits a dead end, he or she will be stuck without help. PC DEPOT's premium services are solutions that help such users over the Internet.

### **Elimination of the digital divide, which the Company has regarded as one of its social missions**

PC DEPOT is prioritizing support for customers struggling to use digital network devices. To this end, the Company has been making steadfast efforts to improve its services. These efforts cultivate a service market, enabling the Company to achieve its unique business model.

The Company considers that its corporate social responsibility (CSR) is to lower the digital divide in society. To a certain extent, a digital divide arises between people who can use information and communication technologies, and those who cannot. It is not good for society as a whole when people who cannot use these technologies find themselves at a disadvantage. The Company intends to contribute to more convenient and enjoyable daily lives of these people by supporting them in making

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the most of IT services. This support service is being provided by PC DEPOT, with its stores acting as a base for such services.

President Nojima says that the Company will take up challenges but will not take excessive risks. The Company will conduct experiments, confirming a new course of action before carefully expanding its business.

The Company has been developing IT solution stores known as Smart Life stores that customers can maintain a relationship with over the long term. Instead of merely enjoying the convenience of a neighborhood PC superstore, users can have the Company solve the problems they experience when using IT equipment and networks.

New devices and services are continuously entering the market, which is a characteristic of the information and communication technology market. Customers need support in order to maintain an IT environment that enables them to fully utilize the products and services they use. Smart Life stores provide services and detailed explanations so that users can make full use of the features of their desktops, notebooks, smartphones, tablets (multi-function mobile terminals), and other devices, as well as meeting any other user requirements as part of a total set.

These services are truly convenient. If consumers use products over a long period of time, in addition to the profit generated at the time they make the purchase, it is quite likely they will start to pay fees for services that make using such products more convenient. To make this happen, users must already be satisfied with the convenience provided by the service.

### **Ahead of others in expanding subscription (monthly charge)-based business**

The starting point for traditional retailers is merchandise, but since the Company is both a retailer and service provider, its starting point is also services. It will offer Internet-related services, mainly for devices, thereby building relations with its customers.

The Company generates profits in three ways: firstly, selling products; secondly, through technical fees for product repairs; and thirdly, from monthly fees paid by members who receive ongoing support from the Company. The core of the Company's business in particular is the support fees paid by its premium members (subscribers), making it unique in the retail industry.

### **Business starts with personal computers**

President Nojima used to work at Nojima Corporation, a consumer electronics superstore (Code No. 7419, listed on the first section of the TSE). The eldest son of Nojima Corporation's founder is currently president of that company, while Takahisa Nojima his brother, is president of PC DEPOT. He was in charge of supervising stores and merchandise at Nojima Corporation, but once personal computers began to become popular, he decided to set out on his own and established an independent

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business. While Nojima is still one of the shareholders of Nojima Corporation, there is no business relationship between that company and PC DEPOT.

At age 34, President Nojima founded the Company. In the early days after the founding of his business, many people wanted to own their own desktop or notebook computer, but such hardware was still beyond their reach. In those days, only a limited number of people went all the way to Akihabara to buy their own personal computers. In contrast, Nojima went into business selling PCs in the same way that retailers in general deal with new merchandise. Company business performance steadily improved and in 1999, some five years after its establishment, it became listed on JASDAQ. Subsequently, the Company was promoted to the first section of the TSE in November 2015.

As the Internet era emerged in 2000, the Company entered into a new phase. At the time it was listed, it operated about a dozen stores with net sales of 15 billion yen, ordinary income of 800 million yen, and no debt.

At present, desktops, notebooks, and related products are commonly sold at consumer electronics superstores. Also, there is a wide variety of specialist computer superstores. When viewed in the broad sense of consumer electronics and computer superstore sectors, the Company ranks in a low position in terms of size, yet is competing on a different playing field to its rivals. The Company is not directly competing with the biggest companies such as Yamada Denki, Edion, and K's Denki, but is differentiating itself from these companies.

### **Converting franchises to directly-managed stores**

When developing its PC DEPOT stores, which are comprehensive specialist computer retailers, the Company allowed K's Denki stores, which are operated by K'S HOLDINGS CORPORATION (Code No. 8282), to become PC DEPOT franchisees. K's Denki was the second PC DEPOT franchisee. It was a beneficial move for both companies in that a consumer electronics superstore began to deal with PCs.

The Company does business in cooperation with K's Denki because, according to President Nojima, the management concepts of the two companies are quite similar and he felt much empathy with Shuichi Kato, former Chairman of K'S HOLDINGS CORPORATION. The Company has been focusing basically on being a chain store operation that is easy for customers to use—for example, by offering self-service sales aside from parts and offering discounts for paying cash instead of points cards.

Aside from PC DEPOT franchises, PC DEPOT PC Clinics which are franchise outlets providing technical services which were established as concessions inside consumer electronics superstores. PC Clinics successfully operated in K's Denki stores, and the franchise was then expanded.

As of the end of March 2021, there are 55 directly-managed PC DEPOT stores (including 52 Smart

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Life stores), 13 stores outside the Kanto region run by the PC DEPOT Stores Co., Ltd. subsidiary (including 9 Smart Life store), and 3 franchise stores, for a total of 71 stores. In addition, there are 58 directly-managed PC Clinics, 6 stores run by the PC DEPOT Stores Co., Ltd. subsidiary. As such, the Company currently operates 135 stores.

PC Clinic was operated mainly by FC stores until 10 years ago, but the Company transformed the FC stores into directly-managed stores. The Company and K's Denki agreed that direct management would be more effective for enhancing service functions of the stores, and so the Company acquired these franchised stores. Currently, the Company operates directly managed PC Clinics inside K's Denki stores.

Store development conditions

As of March 2021	Store development conditions			(Stores)
	PC DEPOT Large suburban- type stores	Smart Life stores Medium and small stores in metropolitan areas	PC Clinics Counters established as concessions inside consumer electronics superstores	Total
Directly- managed	3	52	58	113
Subsidiaries	4	9	6	19
FC	3			3
Total	10	61	64	135

NOTE: Smart Life stores represent PC DEPOT Smart Life Partner (SLP) stores.  
 Subsidiaries represent PC DEPOT Stores (Kyushu, Chubu, Shikoku, Shinetsu and Tohoku regions).  
 PC Clinics represent counters established as concessions inside consumer electronics superstores, and FC represents franchise stores.

### Ongoing Web business

EJWORKS Co. (ejworks), a PC DEPOT subsidiary is engaged in the IT solution business and has a line of business that includes providing Internet services and Web content creation. The Internet services market started from around 2000. However, this market has since matured, and a process of survival by natural selection has begun among Internet service providers. The Company is acquiring small-to-midsize providers and working to maintain their customer-oriented services. Customers will experience a seamless transition since they would keep their original email addresses.

Moreover, the Company has recently been utilizing this subsidiary as a support team for its content development and has come to attach more importance to it. The idea is to position it as a new support base for development.

### The Company has made use of part-time workers, and it has hired some of them as regular employees

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As of the end of March 2021, in addition to 834 regular employees, 774 part-timers on an 8-hour shift were working for the Company. They carry walkie-talkies with them in the store in order to help each other by sharing information, which allows them to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction. Many part-time workers have been working for the Company for years, and each year roughly 40 to 50 workers change their status from part time to full time.

### **Corporate governance: Establishing the Appointment and Compensation Committee**

Of eight directors, there are three outside directors, two of whom are independent outside directors. In addition to five executive directors, there are seven executive officers, three of whom are newly elected for the current term. There are four auditors, three of whom are independent outside auditors.

At the general meeting of shareholders held in the last year, two directors on the executive side resigned and one director was newly elected. The Company intends to downsize the Board by clearly defining the roles of each director in order to promote active discussion and speedy decision-making.

Mr. Mineo Fukuda, an outside director, is an entrepreneur who successively filled the post of managing director at Recruit Holdings Co., Ltd., president of KADOKAWA CORPORATION, and vice-president of Jupiter Telecommunications Co., Ltd. Mr. Hidetaka Fukuda, an outside director, has worked at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and is acquainted with IT, information and telecommunication. Ms. Yumiko Masuda is the representative director of Consumer Voice Research Institute, Limited, and is familiar with consumer-oriented management.

Established in February 2019, the Appointment and Compensation Committee consists of at least three directors, with the chairman and the majority of committee members being outside directors.

Most executive officers who are responsible for the business are in their 40s, indicating that management talent has developed. President Nojima established this Company after leaving Nojima Corporation. Regarding the operation of the company, the president is aiming to implement business management suitable to fulfill the need for PC DEPOT to continuously develop in the rapidly-changing IT industry as a public company.

### **3. Strength: Shifting to a profit structure focused on service revenue**

#### **A mechanism that is impossible for others to copy**

The business model at PC DEPOT is unique, and competitors have opened stores similar to Smart Life stores. However, these competitors have not established a system or trained employees to provide premium services at the same level as the Company. The Company is a retail service company for personal devices that provides solution services under a membership system. With no other companies

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pursuing a solution-service-based business model in the same manner as the Company does, the Company is building up to become the one and only business of its type.

Even if another company tried to provide such services, it would be extremely difficult to (1) train the personnel required for technical services, (2) tolerate a decline in profits in the early stages due to the shift to a service income type business, and (3) provide an extensive service menu from now onwards. We can therefore say that the Company's superiority over its rivals is significant.

Service income has been increasing as the number of use of PCs, smartphones and tablets increases. Most individual own not only one device but rather multiple devices. Also, families own multiple devices. Needs for dependable services rise according to the number of devices owned which makes it easier for the Company to have such users become regular customers. Moreover, service income has been increasing thanks to an increase in the number of users of service-inclusive products where products and services are provided together.

The Company provides services by team play. It has spent more than 10 years developing this system, which has become a business model that constitutes part of its corporate culture.

### **Convenient services—Comprehensive Cloud Services**

The Company has launched full-fledged "Comprehensive Cloud Services." One of the typical new services is "Just Show up and Buy a New PC." The Company provides its premium members with an automatic data backup service for Internet devices such as PCs and backup data reproduction services using a patented, proprietary, comprehensive cloud system.

Since data on PCs are backed up, when you buy a new PC, you don't need to bring your own PC to the store to take data from it. Customers can have their new PCs ready for use with no hassles since the general mirroring service (backup of the same data on the cloud) provided by the Company allows them to save the data from their PCs onto the cloud. Their smartphone data is also saved on the cloud via PCs. Investments in such services are not big investments compared to those involved in the creation of a new store so the Company can gradually keep expanding this service.

It will prove difficult for other companies to offer the same service. The Company has enhanced the PC Clinic functions at its stores. It has trained and developed engineers with expertise in PCs, smartphones, and the Internet. The Company has already thus created a mechanism through which it can make profits. Even if consumer electronics superstores try to imitate our business model, it will prove difficult for them to develop the same functions by using such staff at their stores.

### **Smart Life stores are fashionable and convenient: Specialization in services**

Smart Life stores display less merchandise than conventional stores. Smartphones and tablets now occupy more of the display shelves. Space available for service needs has greatly increased via store

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renovation that provides all services the customer wants rather than focusing on selling products.

Store development history of PC DEPOT

Number of stores at the end of each term	(Stores)							
	1995.3	2000.3	2005.3	2010.3	2015.3	2019.3	2020.3	2021.3
PC DEPOT								
Directly-managed Smart Life store	1	10	28	43	36	12	8	3
Subsidiaries Smart Life store				4	13	10	7	4
FC		8	32	17	3	3	3	3
PC DEPOT PC Clinics								
Directly-managed					52	53	58	58
Subsidiaries					0	5	5	6
FC				24	6			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>135</b>

NOTE: Smart Life stores include renovated stores and new openings. Decline in number of directly-managed stores due to conversion to Smart Life stores.

The variety of professional accessories in a store may not satisfy the needs of PC aficionados, but this poses no problems since customers can ask for an item at the store counter and the store will obtain it for them soon after. The name of the counter for responding to customers' needs (such as computer repairs) changed from PC Clinic to Dr. Smart, and staff members now wear a new uniform.

The "Smart Pack" billing plan is also coming into wide use, which includes a hardware device, software, and Internet connection in a single package. This package allows customers to use hardware, software, and an Internet connection by simply paying a monthly fee instead of having to buy a hardware device and paying a monthly fee for the necessary software and Internet connection. Although this is a type of three to four year loan for an amount determined by subtracting the product's estimated residual value at the end of the loan term from the product's sticker price, since customers are already familiar with the billing plans of Japanese cell phone carriers, which require a two-year subscription, they will find this system acceptable.

Smart Life stores will not just sell products; they will create packages and provide customers with the solutions that they want. Their customers will become members who will use the services they offer over long periods of time. President Nojima stressed that the approach for Smart Life stores will not be to simply display products and ask customers to choose the ones they like. Instead they will be offered a one-stop service to provide them with the Internet communications that they want. Consequently, the atmosphere at these stores will be different from that of conventional stores and

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customer counters will be centrally placed within them.

### **Opening a large number of Smart Life stores by renovating existing ones**

The Company continues to open new Smart Life stores by renovating and reopening existing stores. Smart Life stores transformed from existing PC DEPOT stores already have achieved a certain level of recognition and regular customers. The key to their success is how many new service-oriented customers they can acquire. Smart Life stores can be set up even if the location is less than favorable. As the service grows, and the percentage of total sales that it represents increases, profitability will further improve as a result.

Costs for renovation are lower than those for opening new stores. Moreover, a marked impact can be noted. Comparing the situations before and after renovation, the profitability of renovated stores is about 20% higher than that of existing ones. The same expenditure required to open a new store with an area of 400 to 500 *tsubo* could instead be used for renovating four stores each with an area of 300 *tsubo*. Furthermore, the probability of recouping investments is higher, and the returns are also higher. Therefore, such moves are given first priority.

On the other hand, there still remains considerable room for new Smart Life store openings. As a store focusing on providing services, we estimate there are approximately 200 locations where these stores could be opened. The Company will first open stores primarily in the Kanto region to enhance its brand power through providing community-based services. The Company reckons that it requires 100 to 200 *tsubo* of land in Tokyo's 23 wards and 200 to 300 *tsubo* of land in the greater Tokyo area if it plans to effectively open a Smart Life store in a vacant space.

### **Opening Smart Life stores in central Tokyo**

The Setagaya-Kinuta Store was the first new Smart Life store. Customers are now steadily increasing there. Many customers are bringing in hardware purchased from other companies for repairs, thus increasing the store's customer base. This store was launched on a full-fledged basis in March 2016 and the Company invested around 400 million yen in this store opening due to its wide floor space of 300 *tsubo*. However, this is an exceptional case. The Company usually invests roughly 200 million yen in stores with a floor space of 100 to 150 *tsubo*, and roughly 50 to 70 million yen in stores that have all their own fixtures and furnishings.

Since this is the first new Smart Life store, the store does not have any already existing customers. It did not attempt to attract customers with product sales as traditional PC DEPOT stores do. Instead, first the store encourages customers to visit and then it attempts to gain their acceptance by providing them with services for which they can readily seek advice if they encounter any problems. It takes some time for the store to build up its popularity; however, customers will start relying on the store

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when they have difficulties with their smartphones, PCs, and tablets.

Many people want the solution services provided by PC DEPOT. The Company launched the Aoyama Store in 2015 and the Azabu-Juban Store in 2016 as city-center stores in Tokyo. These stores target new customers living in central Tokyo. Customers visiting the Aoyama Store live in the neighborhood. More female customers than expected are visiting the store.

### Unique service program members

In-store arrangements like those of Smart Life stores are found in Europe, but the Company's business model, which allows it to retain customers mainly through providing services does not exist either in the West or in Asia.

The inspiration for this business model dated back more than 10 years. President Nojima aimed to make customers of people who were not skilled at using PCs. He tried to provide free help to people who were unable to use PCs easily and those who wanted to reset their frozen PCs.

Next, he gave priority to serving "people who have difficulties." He dug deep into the technical support business and made it a tool for differentiating his company from others. Thinking that it would be more convenient to receive service continually by paying monthly fees than paying fees every time a technical problem occurred, he launched a monthly fee system in 2005. Today, the service has been refined into a scheme that can provide services when users face any type of technical trouble. The convenience of the premium service has been enhanced as more women and families use PCs.

Premium members have been increasing at a very high rate. However, this does not make money in the short term. The Company needs to make an up-front investment for each router which takes a year to recoup from the monthly premium service fees. However, once the initial outlay has been covered, profit is generated at a fixed rate from the second year onward.

PC technical services (example) of PC Clinics (Dr. Smart)

		(yen)	
		Premium member	General
Regular maintenance	Windows	0	48000
	Mac	0	43000
Recovery work updates	Windows	7000-11000	35000
	Mac	7000-11000	25000
Special for simultaneous PC purchase PC setup service - regular	Windows	6000	32000
	Mac	14000	35000
Data	Data backup for a PC under repair	7000	32000
	Data backup for a PC that does not start	12000	37000

(Note) "Premium member" and "General" indicate the Company's members and non-members, respectively.

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### **Convenience of PC Clinics**

PC DEPOT's PC clinic service, Dr. Smart, offers free consultation and free diagnosis for any products including those purchased at other stores without the need to make a reservation. For fixed fees, the Company provides repairs and other services for Windows, Mac, smartphones, tablets, data, and assembled computers. The Company offers highly convenient services for a variety of purposes such as initialization, configuration, upgrading, exchanging, data backup, data salvage, and security measures. As premium members will gain free access or significantly reduced fees for the available services, they will receive strong value from their membership.

## **4. Future development: Enhancement of the connection with members and development of the related population**

### **Changes in the business environment**

The coronavirus pandemic has led to a significant increase in online response needs. As a result, inquiries have increased, product sales have increased sharply, and the acquisition of new members has also increased. Meanwhile, smartphone sales have decreased because it is not necessarily urgent for customers to purchase a new one.

Needs have increased more than ever before for PC replacement, network environment improvements, online learning using tablets, online calls and video calls using smartphones, etc.

In response, the Company is working to 1) accurately understand service needs, 2) serve members on a priority basis, 3) focus on urgent support, 4) reflect such needs in planned demand, and 5) acquire new members.

### **Responses to novel coronavirus infection**

The Company's first management priority during the coronavirus pandemic is to ensure the effectiveness of safety measures as much as possible. Each employee is expected to act by prioritizing the safety of employees and customers by paying attention to his or her own personal life as well as workplace environment. On this basis, employees work to improve and support customers' digital lives.

Though there was an increase in transient customers in April and May 2020, PC DEPOT prioritized digital devices for members with genuine urgent needs. For example, smartphone sales were given lower priority if there was no immediate need to replace the current one.

In terms of response to coronavirus, the Company has carefully implemented measures to prevent clusters from occurring at its stores and offices. At present, there is a risk of infection everywhere. The Company pays sufficient attention to partitions and distancing as well as ventilation and disinfection.

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As customers now come to stores mainly on an appointment basis, they are less likely to experience a crowded situation or to have to wait a long time as was the case before. Because customers come to stores mainly on an appointment basis, customer traffic does not sharply increase or decrease and has become evenly distributed.

### **New Lifestyle: Some time is needed for DX policy to become a major trend**

Electronic payment using smartphones is spreading widely. As more online services become available, the Company is strengthening its lecture options on how to use them effectively. To improve services, a members' lounge has been established within stores.

Needs for telework and online learning are increasing in order to respond to the novel coronavirus, and sales of PCs and tablets are rapidly growing.

With regard to the New Lifestyle initiative, the following developments in particular are gaining momentum: 1) inquiries on purchasing new PCs to replace old models in order to effectively use online services and improving one's Internet environment, 2) how to use online learning and remote communications, 3) the revision of the new service usage fees, and 4) an expansion from existing to new members. Demand for the Company's services is increasing rapidly.

The government's policy to promote digital transformation (DX) is drawing attention in the form of remote working and remote schooling partly due to the effects of the coronavirus, but it will take some time for it to gain significant momentum. To promote DX at home, Digital Consultant by family, a type of service in which the Company is a forerunner, will be crucial. The Company has been focusing on promotion and advertisement since the second half of the term ended March 2021, sending the message of "let's create a new digital life with a Digital Consultant in Smart Life."

### **Establishment of a new vision and mission**

The Company established a new vision and mission and started activities from the term ended March 2021. This new vision is to "eliminate the digital divide that arises from differences in age, gender, income, education, place of residence, and so on," while the new mission is to "bring Digital Consultants to all homes."

The Company is promoting a dedicated team system to provide one-stop support services in order to support customers' digital lives at home so as to become their Digital Consultants. The dedicated Digital Consultants will work with premium members to plan their future digital lives and to introduce products and services based on said plans, which will lead to the creation of planned demand.

Working from home, online learning, online life, and online social exchanges have accelerated all at once. In the corporate sector, while some companies had already prepared for such a shift and responded smoothly, most companies had to respond in quite a rush. At home, people may have

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thought that smartphones were all they needed, but now they must also be able to use PCs effectively again.

PC DEPOT's Vision and Mission	
Vision	<p>"Eliminate the digital divide."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate the digital divide that arises from differences in age, gender, income, education, and place of residence.</li> </ul>
Mission	<p>"Bring Digital Consultants to all homes."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By promoting a dedicated team system to provide one-stop support services in order to support customers' digital lives at home so as to become their Digital Consultants,</li> <li>• we will help our premium members to design their future digital lives,</li> <li>• thereby promoting digital life consultation services to create demand with planned proposals.</li> </ul>
Current strategies	<p>Shifting to management focused on LTV (lifetime value)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expansion of stores and commercial areas, development of new-style stores                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of renovation into Smart Life stores</li> <li>• Development of a new-style store (Connected Mobile Store)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Development of new services, expansion of promotional activities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening of collaboration with companies (e.g., Asahi Culture Center (online lectures) and Kanagawa Shimbun)</li> <li>• Plan to launch a wide range of advertising activities (e.g., television commercials)</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Expansion of hiring and education                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to hire 150 new employees in spring 2021 (hired 76 new employees in April 2020)</li> <li>• Plan to accept 100–400 loan employees from HIS through employment sharing</li> <li>• Strengthening of Digital Consultants</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
KPI	<p>ARR of NCS (New Customer Success members), number of subscription members, APRU and CRR</p>
Financial targets	<p>Ordinary income to sales ratio of 10%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross margin of 50% or more</li> <li>• Higher ratio of solution service sales</li> </ul> <p>ROE of 15% or more</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive shareholder return</li> </ul>

### "Digital Consultant" declaration

The Company believes that three out of four households do not have a Digital Consultant. This view is based on the collective opinion of employees working at our stores. It is rare for customers to have among their family members a reliable person to consult about their digital needs. "We can become that Digital Consultant." This is how our new mission was born.

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A team of Digital Consultants (Works) for premium members consists of 3 to 5 consultants and covers 500 to 800 households. As such members are families, the number of persons covered by a team is estimated to be 1,500 to 2,500 in total. Digital Consultants make comprehensive proposals on digital utilization from a lifecycle viewpoint and identify potential future needs. They do not adopt an attitude of pushing products to increase sales. While obtaining referrals to family members and friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc., Digital Consultants will work to increase the related population among covered households. In this way, they will acquire new members.

### **Collaboration initiatives**

The Company started to collaborate with Asahi Culture Center to help its members start taking online courses. Asahi Culture Center has 100,000 members nationwide and 50,000 members in the Tokyo metropolitan area; it started to offer online courses in May 2020. PC DEPOT will help Asahi Culture Center's members to use PCs, smartphones, and tablets smoothly. For example, the Company will offer an online starter package to use an iPad for members who are not well-versed in digital techniques. In this package, an iPad will be provided together with Asahi Culture Center members' exclusive support services. Options include a 2,000 yen/month course and a 4,000 yen/month course.

In December of the same year, the Company started to work with the Kanagawa Shimbun to build ties among people in collaboration with local Smart Life stores by using iPad to communicate local information and host events without relying on the newspaper's regular subscribers.

### **Expectations for GIGA schools**

In April of last year, programming education became a required subject in elementary schools, and in April of this year, it became mandatory in junior high schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is promoting the Global and Innovation Gateway for All (GIGA) initiative to realize optimum learning for individual students by providing a terminal device for every student and utilizing a cloud-based network.

It is expected that educational demand will increase in relation to this development. For this reason, the Company has started to put full effort to capitalize on it by, for example, holding a grand educational PC fair for elementary and junior high school students at all stores. As employees are already conversant with PCs, they are now closely studying the new Course of Study to prepare for the opportunity to provide consultation services to parents and children together through adequate conversation. Also this year, full swing solicitation of new premium members commenced.

### **Declaration by President Nojima: From sales to producing value**

In May 2018, President Nojima released a four-page document entitled "To Stakeholders" that

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outlined his thoughts which was a highly significant step.

First, he deemed business operations to be productive for creating long-term value. While AI and robots were attracting attention, he wrote about "expansion of human production domains."

Second, President Nojima cited the following corporate values: i) Social (sociability and social contribution); ii) Environment (the environment); iii) Education (work styles and learning methods); iv) Entertainment (creation of new value, such as enjoyment, based on human efforts); v) Governance (corporate governance and operational control). These were referred to as EEESG ("Triple ESG") by adding two Es to ESG.

Third, for education, President Nojima proposed shifting to new work styles in consideration of the stability of life and productivity, as well as the enhancement of humanity and productivity. Stressing the importance of future design, he cited a consultant designer and engineer-artisan.

Fourth, President Nojima attached importance to entertainment, seeking to provide venues to deliver satisfaction to customers where: i) customers find satisfaction when they visit stores; ii) PC DEPOT staff can share and deliver satisfaction and create a future by providing the customer a feeling of being cared for; iii) customers find gaming enjoyable; iv) customers enjoy learning about new ways of using devices; v) customers find assembling devices enjoyable; vi) customers feel secure when seeing their IT devices being inspected; and vii) customers find it fun to come to stores along with family members and make future digital plans together.

Fifth, to deepen communication with stakeholders through mutual exchange of information, President Nojima installed officers dedicated to v) AR (associate relations), vi) PTR (partner relations), vii) MR (member relations), and viii) ICR (intercompany relations) in addition to the existing officers in charge of i) CCC (customer communication centers), ii) CR (call centers), iii) IRSR (investor shareholder relations), and iv) PR (public relations). AR will serve as the contact point with employees and their families, PTR as the contact point with business partners, MR as the contact point with members, and ICR as an internal public relations contact point.

The aforementioned message from the president expressed the Company's integrated thinking. The fact that the president composed the message himself deserves high praise.

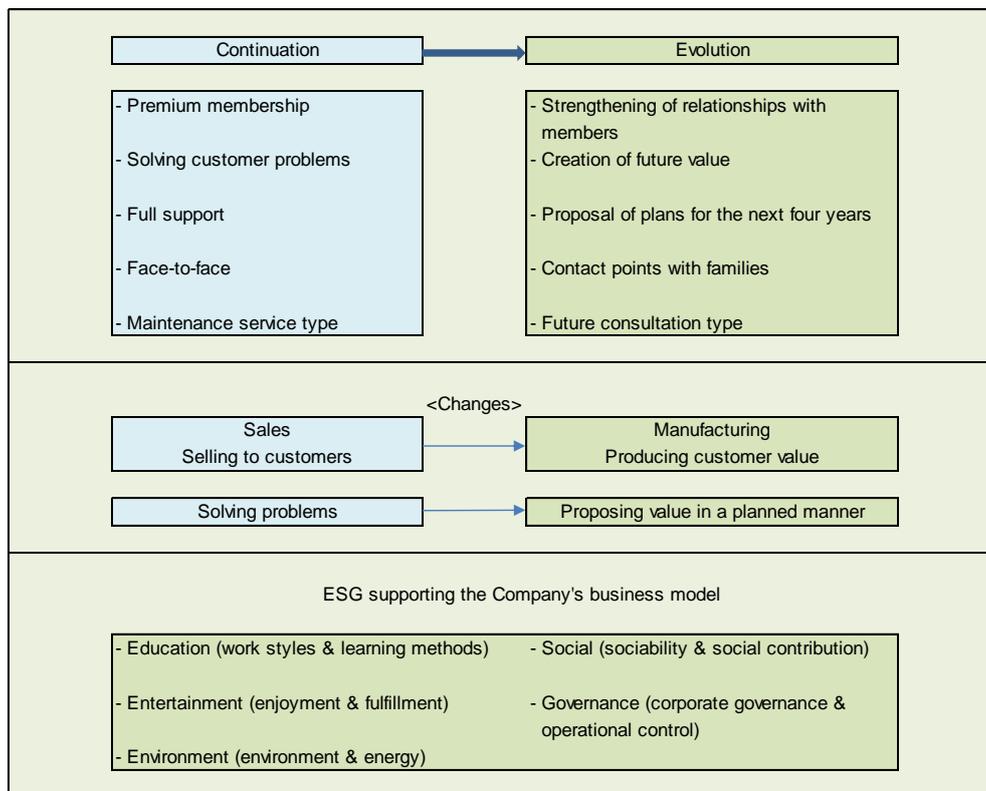
### **Strategic move to shift the business model**

As part of initiatives to evolve its business model, in addition to the Company's existing problem solving support service, the Company will provide customers with products and services necessary for their future digital lives in accordance with planned proposals. The Company will devise a plan with customers and their families regarding when and where to buy which products and services in the future.

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Evolution of PC DEPOT's business model



"How can I install an electronic payment application on my smartphone and use it easily?" Such an inquiry gives Company staff members some effective cues for offering consultation services.

Many children and youths are heavy smartphones users but less familiar with PCs than older generations. Here, consultation needs arise from inquiries like "How can I use a PC at home?" "When should I replace it with a new one?" or "How can my family share a PC more easily?"

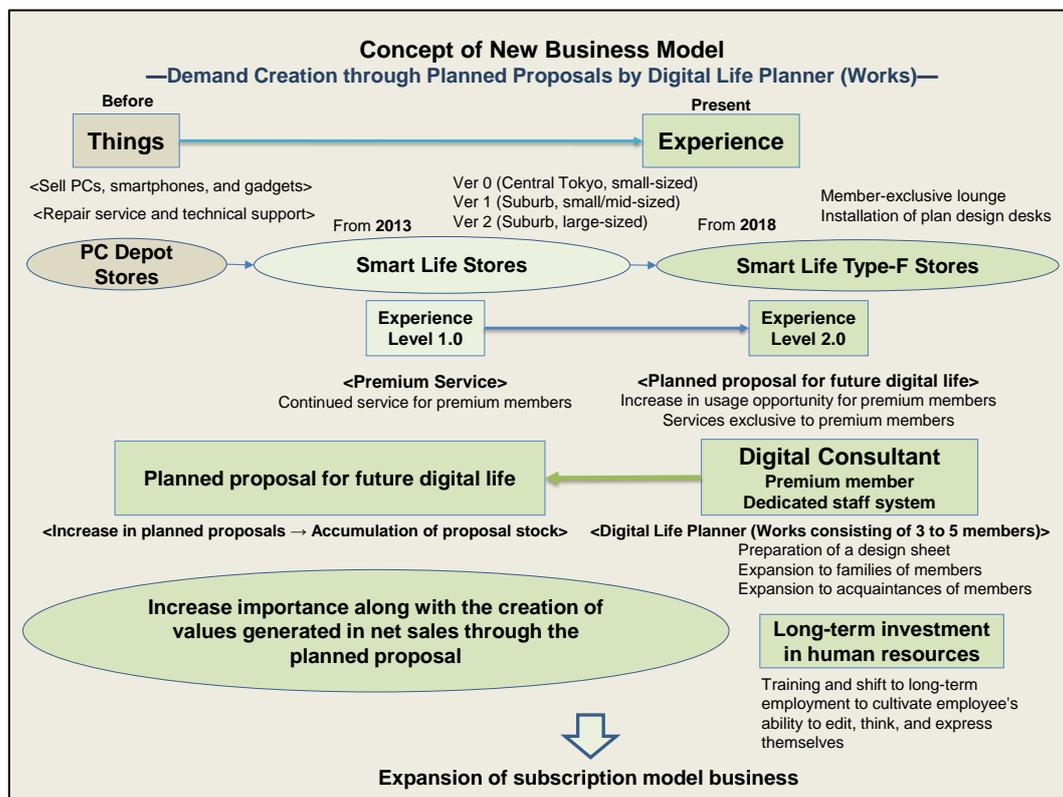
Since summer 2018, the Company has been shifting to a digital life consultation-based business model. Premium members are supported by teams called "Works," each of which is composed of three staff members: (1) consultant designer and (2) engineer-artisan. This model became fully operational in stores since autumn of the same year, and the employee performance evaluation scheme was updated accordingly. The Company has been expanding this activity widely since spring 2019.

**Full-scale rollout of Digital Consultant with the trademark registration of Digital Life Planner**

With the trademark registration of Digital Life Planner having been completed in May 2019, this term may be used only by the Company. Personnel dedicated to the Digital Life Planner comprise a Works (a term used internally by PC DEPOT) of three to five members, and this Works plans future digital life together with premium members. The Digital Life Planner will systematically create digital

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value, which focuses on the family and consists of all types of digital devices, in the lives of our premium members. The Company will expand the service through word-of-mouth with our members' friends and neighbors.



This plan will be compiled in the design sheet, which specifically schematizes a plan up to three to four years into the future and will be shared among the team members. It is a tool for the team to engage the families of our premium members, and it makes it possible to conduct careful and detailed consultations. As the relationship grows closer, the proposal will entail the things that are really necessary and that add value, and it will be actualized as planned demand.

The benefit to the user will be prioritized first, which in turn will create demand that will generate profit for the Company.

The team of Digital Life Planner will systematically provide consultation to associates of the membership system, which the Company has cultivated over the past 10 years. The Company will build this system and reinforce the cycle of subscription-based business into an even stronger model.

The key will be human resource development, and the president himself is leading this effort. This business model was borne out of the president's personal concept: how to increase the customer's digital assets and enrich their lives. It is not about the consumption of physical goods, but enhancing

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the experience. The Company named this concept "Experience Level 2.0," and it is nurturing human resources to realize this concept.

To achieve this purpose, the Company is planning for the evolution of Smart Life stores in the area of store creation. In the remodeling of stores into Smart Life Ver 1 Type-F stores, lounges that can only be accessed by premium members will be created and Plan Design Desks, where the customer will develop solutions together with the Digital Life Planner, will be installed.

### **Formation of teams**

A Works that consists of three to five members has three benefits. 1) The working style of a Digital Life Planner is more enjoyable in comparison to conventional working styles; 2) Members of the team will work together, which will accelerate the growth of members; and 3) From the perspective of premium members, they will be supported by three staff members who all share the member's needs through the design sheet, conveying the feeling that the service level is being upgraded.

Works will have its own objective as a team, and it will contribute to increase in net sales by actualizing the demand created through planned proposals. Instead of pursuing sales in a flow, the Works only needs to accumulate future digital assets according to the plan.

### **Establishment of a value production system**

In the past two years, the Company has focused on reinforcing its contacts with premium members and refrained from advertising temporary sales campaigns and employing part-time workers to support those campaigns.

Reaching out to new customers by way of existing members will increase if the Company's consultation services take hold. The Company focuses on enhancing its reputation and brand strength by encouraging existing customers to spread the word about the merits of its services to their friends and neighbors.

The Company hired 140 new graduates in April 2021, compared to the 70 and 100 new graduates hired in April 2019 and April 2020, respectively. Applicants must meet all of the following requirements: 1) attend a briefing session held at the headquarters, 2) submit a report on a specified issue to move on to the second interview, 3) submit a collage to undergo a job interview with directors, and 4) receive an employment guarantee notice after the Company obtains their parents' approval. These requirements are relatively severe, making it difficult to join the Company.

The Company emphasizes that it is not a mere retailer of PC products but a creator of digital life value for the new digital society through face-to-face communication with customers. Its business model is extremely advanced and epoch-making. As such, the presentation of its business is popular among students, which has led to a remarkable increase in the ability level of successful applicants.

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### **Promoting workers' work way reform**

PC DEPOT has set a regular closed store day. As a general rule, all stores are closed on the third Wednesday of each month. However, exceptions are PC Clinics inside K's Denki stores and some other stores, such as those inside shopping malls.

The Company will focus on three points in future management. The first point is the work way reform, by which the Company has shortened business hours. The Company shifted the closing time of the stores which used to stay open until 8 or 9 p.m. to around 7:30 p.m. While the customers come to our stores with problems, if we can quickly understand and respond to those problems, this will result in greater customer satisfaction and shortened waiting time. This will also prove effective in fostering a workforce. The training of new employees has been making progress and it is likely that they will soon become a substantial part of the workforce.

Secondly, the Company will focus on the importance of PCs in the educational market and make an effort to restore the role played by the PC. The Company will emphasize not only smartphones but also the smooth connection to smartphones with the PC as a base. On the other hand, low-priced smartphones are not the Company's main products and focusing on IoT is regarded as a little bit premature even if the use of IoT will eventually spread to homes.

Thirdly, the Company will make work creative and highly value-added through the development of new customers. While people seeking cheap products go to other shops, the Company will aim to attract customers to our stores for excellent services. Consultation on membership is increasing. General customers who are not the members of our services also visit our stores with their smartphones or PCs purchased at other shops when problems occur.

The pursuit of merchandise selling, sales promotion through price reductions, and increasing efficiency only brings about negative impact on enhancing productivity stresses President Nojima. The Company will, on the contrary, dedicate its focus towards: 1) elevating consulting proficiency, 2) fostering technical expertise, and 3) expansion of member-service-inclusive product line-up.

The consultant shall foresee the client's needs, four years into the future, and present a proposal following a consultation hearing. The consultant shall take into consideration future purchasing needs of families and potential replacement with newer models.

The Company goal for its employees is to deliver information and proposals aligned with the customers' future needs, extending 48 months into the future rather than to be constrained to that day's sales. The employee shall present a clear picture of when and what kind of merchandise and service the customer is likely to require, and propose products and services that match the customer's image.

The Company policy is to foster consulting proficiency that matches customer needs, and use that as the source for its competitiveness. In line with this policy, the Company places importance on personal computers. There is a tendency to believe that with the advent of smartphones, personal

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computers are no longer necessary. But in reality, this is far from the truth.

Personal computers are indispensable for the education of children, supporting the activities of youngsters and for convenience in the everyday lives of older generations. The Company believes that consumer needs for personal computers as tools to gather necessary data and information will only increase in the future.

### **Practice of proactive awareness change through use of collages—"Digital life design sheets"**

Under the president's leadership, personnel will create collages of new value creation (a bird's-eye view summarizing ideas currently in mind) and devise roadmaps (design sheets) suited to individual customers.

This will not be a matter of simply providing new smartphones and having customers buy them as replacements. Each officer and each customer should work together to consider the customer's digital life over the next four years, based on which the former will provide a planned proposal and create value in a planned manner.

The Company requires employees to set goals and act on proposals using collages. Smartphones are two dimensional, but PCs are able to express things in three dimensions. As one way to visualize images and thoughts, the capability to edit gained through the experience of developing a single sheet of A4 sized paper (one PowerPoint slide) with various collage sizes is effective.

The Company will design a framework that will promote employee satisfaction (ES). Incentives to achieve that goal will be introduced into the compensation system. Even persons over 50 can be hired as employees and work up to age 70. In other words, by introducing diversified ways of working at the Company, the Company will foster trust and confidence through connection with its stakeholders and in that way motivate the employees.

Once this takes effect, the marketing capacity of the Company as a whole will expand, escalating the value of the Company through an increase in added value. So the Company will carry out these strategies.

As one example of the collage exercises at PC DEPOT, employees are asked to put together a single page (an original message assembled using various materials) and express their own thoughts on themes such as: 1) Robots, AI and my work, 2) Image of my expertise as it relates to the customer, and 3) Human qualities required in the future workplace. Such activities are currently arranged and provided under the leadership of the president.

### **Devising future roadmaps (design sheets) is the key**

For premium services, PC DEPOT creates value based on three to four-year planned proposals. Providing planned proposals will enable the Company to enjoy growth in PC sales even if PC sales

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continue to decline on a global basis. While coming to understand new ways to use devices, customers are encouraged to buy new products for replacement. Regarding smartphones, new product launches do not motivate replacement purchasing. Smartphone product penetration in the market has more or less run its course. Going forward, customers want to buy replacement products that meet their needs when appropriate. What happens at that time? If a consulting service has been properly provided, the customer will want an item that has high quality and functionality. It will certainly be convenient to know how to use it. This is the fundamental reason the Company attaches importance to face-to-face customer interactions.

Each officer will write customers' needs down to devise roadmaps, making it easy for customers to imagine their digital lives over the next four years. Although devising roadmaps is burdensome, doing so will make it easier to provide proposals for the future. As such customers are premium members, they can be contacted properly. By giving proposals for planning and spending, officers can reliably retain customers.

New store openings and shift to Smart Life stores

	(Stores)							
	2014.3	2015.3	2016.3	2017.3	2018.3	2019.3	2020.3	2021.3
PC DEPOT stores								
Directly-managed/subsidiaries (new)		3						
Smart Life store (new)		1	3	2	1			
Smart Life store (renovated)	4	10	7	5	8	6	6	9
PC Clinics								
Directly-managed (new)		2		1			5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>

### Experience-based menu and members lounge at Smart Life stores

In terms of specific actions taken to create planned demand, the Company is expanding the experience-based product menu. Members can experience and learn, among other things, PC assembly, programing, and the creation of original postcards and New Year's cards. At Smart Life stores, members can enjoy various experience in a members' lounge.

Smart Life Mishima Store, which opened in November 2019, is a large store of 500 *tsubo*. It has a large members' lounge and has incorporated experience-based services using drones in which members can experience drone flight and picture taking and editing.

The Digital Consultant within the Works talks to members (subscribers) to find interested users among families. Therefore, the ability of this store to win customers for such experience-based services is markedly higher than other stores.

The Tomisato Store, which was a large store that had a floor space of 800 *tsubo*, was remodeled into a store that has a floor space of 400 *tsubo*. The remaining 400 *tsubo* will be utilized separately. As Smart Life stores provide advice on digital life, they do not display a large collection of products.

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Therefore, even a store with a floor space of 400 *tsubo* is fairly large. The Tomisato Store is quite wide and also has a members' lounge. The remaining space is expected to be used as a base for providing digital life services suitable for the next era.

The Morioka Store, which was also a large store with a floor space of 700 *tsubo*, has been remodeled to have a floor area of 400 *tsubo*. The number of Works will increase compared to before. The increased number of Works will enable the Company to increase the number of members.

### **Further renovation of Smart Life stores**

The Company has made significant progress in store renovation. The transition from the previous PC DEPOT stores to Smart Life stores (SL stores) has made considerable progress. The renovation will be complete within one year.

The next stage is to focus on further renovating SL stores in order to make them into consulting-oriented stores that focus on premium members. For example, a new floor layout that has a wider member's lounge is being adopted.

Store innovation is also underway. The Works designs planned proposals for premium members through discussions with such members at the store. These discussions occur in the premium member lounge. This lounge has none of the fixings of the floor layout of a conventional PC store, such as a communication area, product displays, experience area, and workshop.

Opening a new store costs around 200 million yen apart from land costs. By contrast, each phase of renovation costs only tens of millions of yen. This is not a large burden because it can be funded within the regular cash flow.

In addition, the Company opened five new PC Clinics. Three to five PC Clinics together are expected to generate a business scale equivalent to that of one Smart Life store.

### **Introduction of mobile stores: New SaaS**

With respect to new-style store development, the Company is developing mobile stores. What are stores to PC DEPOT? They are no longer places to sell products. They are a place to meet family members, discuss and give advice on their needs, make proposals, and create digital lives together.

At present, stores wait for customers to visit them, and if necessary, a Works of Digital Consultants will visit each household. Telephone interactions have always been possible. The Company has come this far, and President Nojima is going to take the next step: a new form of SaaS (Software as a Service).

Stores can take diverse forms. The Company could provide a service base in the form of a vehicle that will visit customers rather than waiting for them to visit. Thus, mobile Smart Life stores are likely to appear.

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Like a mobile library, these stores will come near customers' homes. A mobile store can go to a location where it would be convenient to have a conventional store, whether in a city center or a suburb. These mobile stores are not places to sell products. Mobile store staff will discuss and give advice on customers' needs, help them understand how they can receive services, and encourage them to become members. These are the opportunities that mobile stores will provide.

It would be convenient if customers could discuss their needs by making an appointment like a medical examination car for regular medical checkups. Mobile stores can also be a place for having fun through coordination with other services. They can be described as "mobile digital life centers," which is an interesting concept.

If a sizable customer base is formed in the neighborhood, the Company could then open a new store nearby. Alternately, the Company could induce such customers to visit remote stores. A physical store may not be necessary if customers start to visit a remote store by PC or smartphone.

Service-inclusive products for premium members

MacBook	PC Tablet Smartphone Router Camera Printer Audio Speaker Keyboard Display Magazine	Education&Hobby PC
iMac		VAIO Mobile
iPad		FMV Mobile
iPhone		Mobile router
Apple Watch		iPad + Magazine
Apple TV		Wireless printer system
MiDi keyboard		Pen tablet
Sound Bar		Access Point
MacBook Pro		4K wide display
Wireless speaker system		Digital camera
Multi-audio component		
Stereo record player		

NOTE: Premium members may select services in which any of the above products are combined.

### Provision of "Member-service-inclusive products"

Of sales generated through our solution services, the percentage of service-inclusive products is only a little over 10%. It is a consultation service based on planned proposals, so it does not involve pushing products onto the customer. We expect this ratio to gradually increase over time.

Service-inclusive products are now referred to as "Member-service-inclusive products" to clarify the concept. In other words, this means that a customer can purchase service-inclusive products only after becoming a member of the Company's program. Of course, it is possible for a customer to purchase just products only. The customer may also select an appropriate service from various service menus. However, the Company will strive to improve the mechanism that attracts members for a long

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time, by further meeting customers' needs and increasing customer satisfaction through services and products combined together.

These service-inclusive products will start contributing to earnings with a slight time lag. These products have a mechanism similar to four-year installment sales, where the Company makes great efforts at the time of sale to offer services. Since the cost will be collected as part of the monthly service fees, these products will start contributing to earnings after six months to one year.

### **Various support is available for IoT and AI**

5G network services started in 2020. There will be various new movements such as the programming education to be required at elementary and junior high schools as well as digital textbooks to be implemented.

The new devices and services stemming from IoT and AI will rapidly spread to homes. President Nojima believes that the base of the technology is in PCs. To put it more plainly, he believes that the area where the Company's engineers and support teams play an active role will expand rapidly.

The Company is developing services, one after another including a device lock in case of loss of the device, smartphone data automatic storage in the cloud, and backup systems that connect smartphones, PCs, and the cloud in a system. Patent applications have also been submitted.

To make full use of IoT, there will be a variety of service-inclusive products with a monthly-fee membership, such as the Premium Member Solution Hardware. Use of devices expands new connectivity in areas including healthcare, wearable computing and networks, security, entertainment, and content, and leads to development of new uses. Contract details including liability exemptions are expected to change.

The Company will pursue IoT for personal use while maintaining PCs as a platform. Companies such as Google Inc., Apple Inc., and Amazon.com, Inc. will begin providing new services. Robots will be used in homes. Regardless of the circumstances, the introduction of a new network will require new support. This is the Company's main reason operating in specialized areas.

### **The quality of services is its source of competitiveness**

The Company does not merely sell hardware such as PCs and tablets, but offers services. This is a system under which convenient solutions are provided on a continual basis for a monthly fee. Some 60% of visitors to PC Clinics are those who bought products at other stores. That means they are interested in something other than low prices. PC Clinics support PCs owned by our customers, which brings about efficiency.

When considering the profits generated by products sales and from service sales from a perspective of operating profit levels, a clear-cut breakdown of levels classified into products and services is nearly

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impossible to achieve. The reason why this cannot be done is that the Company's management does not differentiate between products sales and service sales. Even though each staff member at stores has their own role, everyone provides both products and services. These sales are not differentiated when assessing employee performance. One pattern used involves a customer buying a product and subscribing to a service, thus becoming a regular customer of PC DEPOT, who naturally comes back again to buy some other product.

However, even when profits derived from product sales and from service sales are viewed from the perspective of operating income under certain prerequisites, the structure in which service sales are highly profitable remains unchanged. In the competition to capture this demand for services, the Company has an advantage that is furthered by its track record over the years and its personnel. Originally, the Company core policy that differentiates it from competitors is providing services requiring time and effort for those customers who are having difficulties using their purchases, but not for customers who do not require any follow-up services after purchase. Such customers are the main target of other companies.

Changes in gross profit of products and services (provisional)

	(millions of yen, %)									
	2014.3		2016.3		2018.3		2019.3		2020.3	
Overall sales (consolidated)	53772	100.0	51729	100.0	43590	100.0	40447	100.0	39137	100.0
Service sales (consolidated)	16194	30.1	24631	47.6	24566	56.4	25270	62.5	22878	58.5
Goods sales (consolidated)	37578	69.9	27098	52.4	19024	43.6	15177	37.5	16259	41.5
Cost of services (Isolated, Estimate)	4676	28.9	7443	30.2	6845	27.9	7405	29.3	6068	26.5
Overall gross profit (consolidated)	18273	34.0	21715	42.0	20044	46.0	18663	46.1	18453	47.1
Service gross profit (provisional)	11518	71.1	17188	69.8	17721	72.1	17865	70.7	16810	73.5
Goods gross profit (provisional)	6755	18.0	4527	16.7	2323	12.2	798	5.3	1643	10.1

NOTE: Goods sales include other services (royalties, Internet-related).

Figures in the column next to sales amount are a ratio of each segment sales to overall sales.

Provisional values are not necessarily accurate; these are approximations as reference data.

## Response to the rise of Internet shopping

There is some concern that Internet shopping might be a threat to over-the-counter sales. In fact, some people browse products at stores but actually buy them online, because of the lower prices.

This scenario is fine for those users who are able to make full use of their newly purchased hardware. However, others are in great need of convenient services in case they do not understand how to use their new hardware fully or are faced with some problem. That is where the Company has a chance to show what it can do. Basic sales of products such as iPhones or iPads do not make much profit. But if customers subscribe to premium services, the relationship with them can be maintained for a long period of time, and service sales will contribute to earnings. In that sense, the Company is continuing to handle new products in a proactive way.

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### Pursuit of LTV (lifetime value)

PC DEPOT has been evolving to achieve a brand-new type of format. After transforming to Smart Life stores, stores experience changed in comparison to their previous formats in that (1) customers stay in the stores longer; (2) more female customers visit; (3) customers revisit more frequently; and (4) customers consult with employees about various matters. The extent of sales in terms of customer hardware purchases changes little after renovation. However, sales from providing services are certain to increase. In other words, the stores gain long-term customers.

A short interval between visits means that visitors revisit the store again sooner once they have bought a product or service. Increasing numbers of female visitors represent the fact that needs for digital devices in households have risen and people wish to have a better command of those devices.

LTV (lifetime value) is a concept in which the time span during which a customer uses a product is considered to be that product's "lifetime." The value of the customer to the business in a general sense during the lifetime of that product is raised, allowing the Company to generate sales accordingly during that time. The Company's service sales do grow but in the normal growth pattern for services they become profitable only in the second or third year of a three or four-year contract. Service quality should be improved so that members are encouraged to buy more products from the same store. Of course, member numbers are bigger at existing stores than at new stores. New stores should initially compete in terms of products sales and then gradually increase the number of customer members from then onwards.

Balance sheets

	(millions of yen, %)					
	2016.3	2017.3	2018.3	2019.3	2020.3	2021.3
Current assets	25381	26123	25702	24589	23823	26899
Cash and deposits	4754	7726	10597	9542	8383	11408
Accounts receivable-trade	13249	11202	8514	9039	9421	9364
Inventories	6128	6103	6125	5642	5695	5704
Fixed assets	9622	9506	9351	9031	9220	10324
Tangible fixed assets	5041	4857	4440	3977	4362	5213
Guarantee deposits	1810	1750	1703	1647	1639	1585
Lease deposits	1323	1403	1332	1338	1226	1648
Total assets	35004	35629	35053	33620	33043	37224
Current liabilities	12271	6786	6279	5499	5059	6436
Accounts payable-trade	1245	1230	964	958	875	869
Short-term loans payable	5200	0	0	0	0	0
Long-term loans payable (within one year)	1044	2125	2243	1594	1286	2187
Fixed liabilities	1347	5830	5523	3962	2725	4268
Long-term loans payable	751	5265	4952	3358	2071	3584
Net assets	21334	23011	23250	24159	25259	26518
Interest-bearing liabilities	6996	7391	7195	4952	3358	5771
Interest-bearing liabilities ratio	20.0	20.7	20.5	14.7	10.2	15.5

The number of service subscription members is increasing, so the LTV of a particular level can be

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ensured depending on the terms of the members' subscriptions. PC DEPOT is meeting the challenge of expanding a business model that is dependent on a customer base formed from members who subscribe to its services. The Company operates while carrying out analysis of its service sales.

### The balance sheet is sound

In the first half of the term ended March 2021, the Company borrowed 4.5 billion yen as working capital, including funds used for coronavirus response. Inventories increased slightly as the Company secured a certain level of inventory position. Meanwhile, accounts receivable decreased as sales of service-inclusive products decreased.

Although the Company borrowed funds in preparation for an emergency as part of its coronavirus response, during the subsequent half year, the Company has had no particular capital needs. The original intention was to secure cash equivalent to three times monthly sales, but the Company did not experience any marked increase in payment postponement or delays from corporate and individual customers.

There are no issues in particular in terms of working capital. The stock level is likely to decline from now on if the planned demand becomes clearer.

Cash flow trends

	(millions of yen)					
	2016.3	2017.3	2018.3	2019.3	2020.3	2021.3
Cash flow from operating activities	516	4292	5045	2563	2029	3350
Net profit after tax	2742	1325	2282	1348	1905	1946
Depreciation	897	943	919	834	752	794
Accounts receivable	-3640	2034	2687	-525	-381	56
Inventories	420	24	-21	482	-53	-8
Accounts payable	-449	-16	-282	14	-80	-5
Cash flow from investing activities	-970	-1090	-297	-721	-949	-2072
Tangible fixed assets	-604	-830	-450	-369	-729	-1665
Intangible fixed assets	-291	-178	-68	-297	-272	-45
Free cash flow	-454	3202	4748	1842	1080	1278
Cash flow from financing activities	2837	-229	-1876	-2897	-2238	1747
Long-short term borrowings	-767	394	-195	-2243	-1594	2414
Common stock issuance	3983					
Common stock repurchases	0	-5	-1006	1	5	-1
Cash dividends paid	-380	-612	-660	-652	-644	-654
Cash and cash equivalents at end-term	4754	7726	10597	9542	8383	11408

### PC DEPOT has sufficient investment capacity

As net sales have decreased, the Company now has a lower need for working capital. It was able to sufficiently fund the capital investment for store remodeling with its internal funds (retained earnings

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and depreciation). Though the free cash flow is positive, the Company has not progressed with the repayment of loans. Taking into consideration the need to respond to the novel coronavirus, the Company intends to maintain sufficient cash and deposits in order to be ready to take the next actions on offense.

There are no major financial concerns. So, how should the Company make efficient use of its free cash flow going forward? The Company will be able to put more effort into investing in human resources and start to create the next business model as well as consider R&D-type open innovation.

As a financial strategy, the Company considers a sound financial position to be an equity ratio of at least 50% and a degree of indebtedness within 25%. Thus, it has sufficient capacity to make further investments.

### **Strengthening of media marketing**

The Company is also focusing on new media strategies. Unlike traditional flyers for stores or product/service promotions, these new strategies aim to inform the public 1) about how to create a digital life, 2) that a Digital Consultant (Digital Life Planner) can help in planning a digital life, 3) that Digital Consultants can provide advice effectively either in-person or remotely, 4) that PC DEPOT will hire many new employees because it needs a new workforce to support its services, and 5) that PC DEPOT would like parents to know all of the above.

### **Employees training: Who are customers?**

On April 6 (Tuesday) and 7 (Wednesday), the Company was closed to business to provide employee training. This was the first such event since its beginning. To achieve a subscription-based customer success company, all employees received thorough training under the president's policy. On May 19 (Wednesday), the Company held an all-employee meeting and confirmed the directions of eight topics.

The most important topic in the training was to reliably determine who are the customers for the Company. Like a membership-based golf club, the Company will focus on its premium members and their families as its customers and will clearly differentiate its services for members from those for non-members. Its policy is to expand the subscription-based business, and not emphasize the mere sale of goods and one-time repair services. Reservations will be the standard for almost all services, which may be a little troublesome for walk-in customers.

### **Devotion of full efforts to human resource development and team building**

Human resource development is the key for team building. President Nojima has been devoting 70–80% of his time to human resource development. Opportunities for all the staff to get together and listen to plan announcements for discussion have increased from once a year to three times a year. Part-time and other non-regular employees as well as regular employees engage in dialogue to directly

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discuss the ideas of the top management.

A Works, which is a team comprised of persons in charge, draws up the future roadmaps (design sheets) of members (subscribers). It is these roadmaps themselves that are the assets that will generate demand sooner or later. This future consultant is the very business model PC DEPOT aims for.

Members (subscribers) are invited to come to the store to discuss their family's future digital life plan with a dedicated team of three to five persons in charge. It takes a long time at first, and not much business is generated for the amount of effort made. However, as the roadmap gradually becomes clear, members will understand what digital life can be incorporated to create joy for themselves and their spouse, children, and parents.

### **Pursuit of uniqueness and initiative to increase the related population**

President Nojima calls the method the creation of the related population. This is to increase the population of people who are involved in the work of PC DEPOT and to create new values from the network in the population. PC DEPOT aims to become a creative company that increases related population.

President Nojima has devised unique strategies to avoid competition as much as possible. He has created a way to avoid competition with both the e-commerce of Internet companies and consumer electronics superstores. Even now, the Company does not provide customers with any rewards points for sales. It intends to compete in terms of gross margin ratio rather than sales amount.

### **Why PC DEPOT can do it?**

The past two years were a period of transition to the new business model, but its direction and contents have been greatly clarified. As consumption of services is strong, support needs for devices continue to be high. Although mass retailers are also trying to shift to a service-based business model, they have in reality not been successful.

What is the difference? In a business model in which gross profit is earned by product sales, companies cannot secure short-term profit unless they pursue flow-type profit. It is difficult for them to patiently pursue stock-type profit completely ignoring flow-type profit. It is nearly impossible for them to be patient for several years accepting current losses.

In fact, a stock-type business model has been pursued by many securities companies in their face-to-face services, too. However, they are still struggling in breaking away from the flow-type business model. Why can't they do it? Because they cannot cross the "valley of death" from flow to stock by accepting losses for several years.

Then, why can PC DEPOT now realize the shift to a future Digital Life Planner business model? Because the subscription by premium members has already been well established. The Company has

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a strength as a forerunner that is 10 years ahead of others. For this reason, while PC DEPOT can realize such a shift, it is considerably difficult for other companies, such as consumer electronics superstores, to do it.

### **Solution first**

The meaning of customer contacts is different for PC DEPOT. In the past, each time a new device is introduced for sale, the Company promoted it to customers to sell it. Now, the Company need not sell today's new product to customers today.

That is merely the logic of the seller, and is not the needs of customers who are members. As the Company is now working with members to develop their future roadmaps, devices can be replaced or purchased additionally at the right time for the members as per the roadmaps.

The Company's focus is on solution first, rather than device first. In other words, the Company will support solutions to members in order to help them to realize what they really want to do in their digital lives.

The concern that the development of digital life roadmaps may eventually end up with high-pressure sales of products and service need to be examined from two aspects. First, the team works with the member to develop roadmaps together and does not draw such roadmaps without permission. Second, the Company is creating a culture to regard such roadmaps as its biggest assets. The Company intends to put the spirit of human resource development into such micro-governance at the level of the actual shop floor.

### **What is planned demand?**

Normally, customers come to the store based on their own planning of replacement or additional purchases. The Company will of course accept such demand, but it is not planned demand as defined by the Company. Planned demand as referred to by the Company is defined as actual demand generated as a result of the dialogue between a member (subscriber) and the Company's dedicated Works, which is documented in a roadmap.

Once a roadmap is drawn, demand can be expected in a planned manner. It is these roadmaps that are stock (assets), and demand is generated as the stock is accumulated.

In the past, the Company succeeded in raising the ratio of service sales from 3% to 50% in 10 years. Given the business model (BM) transformation in the past, there is a sufficient chance of success in the next shift to BM2.

Once the ratio of planned demand rises higher, expected benefits include: 1) Promises will lead to sales; 2) Members' subscription period will be longer; 3) Members will come to the store more often, 4) The number of inquiries to call centers will decrease; 5) Member withdrawals will decrease, and 6)

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Insert flyers will decrease. Therefore, enterprise value is expected to increase significantly.

### **Aiming to expand the customer base: Strengthening new member acquisition based on planned proposals**

There are not many people in their twenties among the members of the Company. They are mostly people with children who want to enjoy a digital life. Seniors who are parents of these people are also active as digital seniors. As it is women who are usually the key people in a family, the Company is also putting effort into support for women's digital life.

New member development in addition to existing members (subscribers) has also been started. While existing members are the main segment, demand creation is led by products. Once the subscriptions of new members increase, costs for the provision of services are incurred first and will be recovered later.

The shift to the business model in which the Company supports customers' digital lives and makes planned proposals to create demand is making steady progress. Thus far, the Company has prioritized services to existing members, but it places greater focus on the acquisition of new members because the internal structure to support such efforts has been improved. Until last year, the Company focused mainly on the promotion of new member acquisition via referrals from existing members and upon PC purchases. Since this year, the Company is putting more effort into acquiring new premium members through advertising and other means. In fact, the Company also focused on providing experience-based products. As a result, the number of new members is increasing.

## **5. Near-term operating results: Up-front investment to acquire NCS (new customer success) members**

### **Response to the novel coronavirus**

Regarding the response to the novel coronavirus, 1) As the Works (teams) are responding to members' needs, they are increasing member satisfaction regarding services by distinguishing members' urgent needs from needs that can be postponed slightly. As the Works can learn customer needs very well through close conversations, they will not lose customers' business even if they have customers wait. 2) Stores are being visited by an increasing number of customers in their 30s and 40s who come with their family members. This is because of the increase in home computing needs. As the Company's customers seek accurate services rather than cheap products, many customers become new members. 3) Although the hiring environment in general has deteriorated due to the effects of the novel coronavirus, the Company considers this to be an opportunity. As the number of job applicants

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is increasing, the Company is expected to hire more employees. This is a good time to secure excellent human resources because the Company has just entered a more aggressive phase. Recruitment is conducted entirely via an online process, including the interview with the president. 4) The economic shock caused by the coronavirus has provided an opportunity to reinvent how PCs are used. This trend is expected to continue for some time. Most people who intend to improve their network environment by purchasing a PC from the Company will also become members.

Quarterly results

		(millions of yen)			
	(Fiscal year)	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q
Products	2018	3512	3335	3552	3496
	2019	3077	3792	3706	4204
	2020	4005	3463	3492	3526
Solution services	2018	6499	6171	6363	6237
	2019	5996	5756	5577	5742
	2020	5729	5438	5582	5809
Internet-related	2018	300	307	304	305
	2019	296	311	298	322
	2020	298	299	302	304
Total net sales	2018	10329	9828	10235	10055
	2019	9385	9875	9594	10283
	2020	10050	9216	9390	9656
Operating income	2018	666	607	753	553
	2019	674	702	854	711
	2020	1057	673	566	597

**Remained at the same level in the term ended March 2021**

The term ended March 2021 saw the net sales of 38,312 million yen (down 2.1% YoY), operating income of 2,893 million yen (down 1.6% YoY), ordinary income of 2,935 million yen (down 2.7% YoY), and net income of 1,854 million (up 7.9% YoY).

The sales of goods increased 3.4% YoY owing to the increasing online commerce. The solution service declined just 5.4% YoY. Selling and administration expenses decreased 2.1% YoY owing to downsizing of sales promotion activities and reduction of business hours. However, the advertising activities have been expanded, including TV commercials, since December last year.

Sales of goods grew remarkably in 1Q. Demand from teleworking from home and learnings at home increased.

On the other hand, regarding solution service sales, the Company proceeded with arranging the digital environment to prevent coronavirus infection by enabling members to book and visit to avoid congestion and distinguishing members' urgent needs from needs that can be postponed slightly,

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whereby the planned demand was made more visible.

### **Preparations for new developments started in the second half of the term ended March 2021**

Preparations for new developments started in the second half of the previous term: 1) the development of new-style stores to expand the areas covered by stores, 2) the expansion of advertising and publicity taking into account the development of new services, and 3) the hiring of new employees and wider provision of training.

### **Stepping up advertising and publicity: start of television commercials**

Last December, the company ran a full-page advertisement in the national edition of the Nihon Keizai Shimbun. Taking the form of an interview with the President, it featured two themes: 1) the change in the digital environment in Japan starting from the home and 2) bringing Digital Consultants to all homes. In addition, television commercials began airing. In December, the commercials were broadcast in local areas, and in January and February, they were broadcast in the Kanto region, emphasizing Digital Consultants for homes.

One response to the television commercials was "I thought that PC DEPOT ran shops specializing in PCs, but it seems that we can consult with them freely," and another was "PC DEPOT seems to be shifting to PC services, and I understood the content of its services for the first time."

Worded differently, there is a growing understanding of PC DEPOT's business model among customers, business partners, and employees' families. This advertising does not have large sales promotional effects in terms of immediately attracting customers to stores, but the recognition level for Digital Life Planners is rising as television commercials talk about them using an easy-to-understand term: Digital Consultants.

### **Reinforcing personnel: Accepting HIS employees as loan employees**

The business model for Digital Consultants has been clarified. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a growing need for digitization and online communication in the home. To handle customers, stores have adopted a reservation system to avoid close contact. Under this system, a considerably large portion of time is reserved, and the content of future designs for the digitization of each home (design sheets) is being enriched.

In dealing with customers, priority is given to members, but it has become necessary to reinforce the personnel of Works (the team in charge of members at the store). The number of workers who are converted from new graduates and part-timers to regular employees was increased from about 100 in April of last year to 140 this spring. Plans call for over 150 employees to be maintained next year, too, but that number is still insufficient.

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Employment sharing, a scheme to accept loan employees from businesses that are struggling amid the COVID-19 pandemic, will begin in March. The Company will accept a maximum of 400 employees from travel company HIS, including 100 in the initial phase, who will join each of its Works and work with its employees.

President Nojima has judged that jobs at PC DEPOT have similarities with those at travel companies. Both find out customer needs through dialog and bring together such needs in a plan. The content of travel is different from that of digital life, but the two approaches are similar. By contrast, while jobs at PC DEPOT appear to resemble those of sales personnel at volume consumer electronics stores, in fact, the former differs considerably from the latter. The cost of the loan employees will be paid partially by the Company, but partly because of government subsidies, both PC DEPOT and HIS can make effective use of this scheme.

### **Preparations for Connected Mobile Stores**

While store renewal is underway, the next plan calls for Connected Mobile Stores (tentative name) to start this coming summer. A Connected Mobile Store resembles a house trailer that is pulled by an automobile; the trailer itself is used as a store. It is air conditioned and has a restroom. It can generate power using solar energy. In addition to a general reception desk, it enables visitors to enjoy services such as a theater and e-Sports through a projector. Of course, in the same manner as at ordinary stores, customers can seek advice on various kinds of digital equipment, including PCs.

To continuously receive services at such a Connected Mobile Store, one must become a member. The pricing system will be developed in time. Connected Mobile Store members can receive services similar to those enjoyed by regular premium members, and different admission fees and monthly membership service menus will be offered.

### **Investment will be resumed**

For the past several years, as it made efforts to shift to new business models, the Company has been able to maintain a certain level of profits despite a sales decrease because it reduced the number of part-time workers hired and advertisements placed and did not open any new stores.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Company accelerated progress on its business model and has been shifting to an active approach since the second half of the previous term. It will (1) increase advertising and publicity to acquire more members, (2) substantially reinforce the personnel of Works, and (3) open new outlets through Mobile Stores. In that sense, it will prioritize costs for the time being. There will be an increase of 1 billion yen to 1.5 billion yen in personnel, depreciation, advertising/publicity, and other expenses. On the other hand, these expenses may be absorbed to a certain extent as greater emphasis is placed on planned demand. In the current term ending March

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2022, the burden of the up-front investment will appear.

Comparison of earnings forecasts

	2016.3	2017.3	2018.3	2019.3	2020.3	2021.3	2022.3 (forecast)	2023.3 (forecast)
Net sales	51729	46417	43590	40447	39137	38312	39100	40500
Gross profit	21715	21249	20044	18663	18453	18076	18800	19700
Ratio to sales	42.0	45.8	46.0	46.1	47.2	47.2	48.1	48.6
SG&A expenses	17628	17846	17062	16083	15512	15183	16750	17200
Ratio to sales	34.1	38.4	39.1	39.8	39.6	39.6	42.8	42.5
Operating income	4086	3402	2981	2579	2941	2893	2050	2500
Ratio to sales	7.9	7.3	6.8	6.4	7.5	7.6	5.2	6.2
Ordinary income	4139	3467	3079	2685	3018	2935	2100	2550
Ratio to sales	9.0	7.5	7.1	6.6	7.7	7.7	5.4	6.3

### Up-front investment for the term ending March 2022

The corporate plan for the term ending March 2022 expects a profit decline, that is, sales of 39,100 million yen (up 2.1% YoY), operating income of 2,050 million yen (down 29.1% YoY), ordinary income of 2,100 million yen (down 28.5% YoY), net income of 1,410 million yen (down 23.9% YoY). The main reason is a large up-front investment in human resources, stores, advertisements to increase NCS members.

Sales from subscription members are expected to be 26 billion yen (up 14.5% YoY). As device-based subscriptions (i.e. product-integrated member services) are increasing, the expenses and accounts receivable will accrue in advance. In the initial year of increasing new members, the expenses will accrue in advance, which will fully contribute to the income from the second or third year.

The operating income for the current term will decrease by a little less than 0.9 billion yen year on year. For the selling and administration expenses, the personnel expenses will increase owing to new hires and transfers from HIS and a large amount of money will be invested in advertising. Personnel expenses will increase by approximately 10% and the advertisement expenses will be doubled.

The Company hired 138 employees including 80 new graduates in April. The 70 and 120 employees from HIS joined in March and June, respectively. 400 employees are scheduled to join from HIS.

The Company is planning to allocate 3 billion yen as capital investment for the current term, a half of which will be appropriated for the purchase of a new training center. Also, the Company is planning to transfer its head office and will install an unprecedented studio in the new head office. It aims to decisively enhance its ability to transmit information by having its own studio.

### NCS's subscription model effect will appear gradually

The framework of NCS-based business model has been completed. Works-based human resource development is ongoing. While maintaining dialogue with premium members, a Works of three to five

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members supports recruitment activities, invites a successful candidate to join the Works, and then divides itself in an amoeba-like manner into two Works to create a new Works.

In other words, the Company has put a teal (evolutionary) organization model into practice, rather than seeking to drive the organization in a conventional, top-down manner. The today's younger generation is sympathetic with this type of organization model more than others. This is a suitable mechanism for the Company to promote the business to support the GIGA initiative, which aims to provide a PC together with the telecommunication capability to every elementary and junior high school student and to utilize them for education.

### **Aims to enter the expansion phase with the concept of *icchi soshin* (team-based value creation and innovation)**

President Nojima is telling employees that business sustainability lies where social contributions and earning power coexist. Now that human resources have been developed, the Company is about to enter a new phase in which it will put its business model into practice to achieve business growth.

The Company is ready to push forward with new business strategies by leveraging value creation as a member of a Works and through the expansion of Works. President Nojima calls this "*icchi soshin*" (team-based value creation and innovation). To put it plainly, team members will be united to work together to create benefits to customers (value) and business profit (value) by bringing a new mechanism (innovation) there and putting it into practice. This requires autonomous management and ethical standards. The Company is also working on employee education to realize this.

### **Transition to a new business model is underway**

The net sales of 51.7 billion yen with an operating profit of 4.08 billion yen reported for the term ended March 2016 is the highest achieved in the Company's history, but under the new business model, net sales of 50 billion yen with an operating profit of 5 billion yen should be achievable.

In regard to creating future value, the Company has given priority to existing premium members. It now focuses on acquiring new members, including via introduction by way of existing members amid the acceleration of the New Lifestyle initiative.

The Company does in fact recognize a new customer also as a family and draws a picture of digital life for three generations. The Company will expand its focus into various opportunities including: (1) Do they make full use of smartphones? (2) When do they replace and what do they purchase? (3) Is Wi-Fi at home sufficient? (4) Are PCs updated adequately and available for use? (5) Is a new PC really necessary? (6) If a PC is replaced, when? (7) Is there an opportunity to use a tablet? (8) Will they be connected with a printer, camera, musical instrument, and so on? (9) Will they also be connected with a TV monitor, speaker, audio, and so on?

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The Company will properly summarize these items and increase the utility value for customers. It will also improve the usability and provide satisfaction. Since the Company draws a picture of the life stage together, it may understand what products or services customers require and when they need them. Therefore, it is easy for customers to speak with a person-in-charge when necessary. The development of such business styles is already popular.

## 6. Evaluation: Increase in new NCS members and shift to an active approach

### Shift to new business model

Is this business model overhaul a continuous evolution or a discontinuous challenge?

Customers will find the new business model definitely more beneficial because they can rely on the Digital Consultants more than before. On the other hand, this model may be a hurdle for those who are unwilling to rely on Digital Consultants so much or find the cost performance to be insufficient.

Employees will build a track record based on their experience from working in the Works, contacting with customers and making digital life plans with an eye on the planned demand in a specific and understandable manner.

Investors will find it decisively easier to understand the Company's business model (system of value creation) because the subscription-based KPI is clearly defined.

Hereafter, it will be necessary to see the sales of the existing solution service a little differently. For example, when a premium member who is also a subscription member purchases a certain product, does he/she want to pay in a lump sum or by installment? Does such member purchase some consumables continuously or not? By reviewing various types of sales, the classification of sales belonging to members and those belonging to non-members will have significance.

### Attention on new KPIs

The Company reviewed the KPIs drastically upon shifting the business model. The priority of KPIs is likely to change for investors as well.

Rather than selling products and services to customers, the Company will work with customers as their Digital Consultants to make digital life plans. These plans will cover a period longer than three to four years. The monthly charge for members is a price to enrich their digital lives in the medium to long run. It is not insurance. If Digital Consultants support members by meeting their requests for advice properly as in athletic clubs, their value will be enhanced; otherwise, the members will resign. The key is how to increase LTV (lifetime value).

From the perspective of investors, what type of people are the core members? What digital products

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and services are included in the planned demand? These will bring additional effects.

Previously, the Company emphasized the ratio of ordinary income to net sales and ROE, but these are not primary KPIs, and new targets will emerge as the Company actually operates and improves the current business model.

The subscription-based business model will generate annual income of 60 billion yen if the NCS target is 600,000 and the monthly charge is 8,500 yen. To this, the proceedings of solutions and product sales are added. It can be easily assumed that the existing target, i.e. an ordinary income to sales ratio of 10% and ROE of 15%, will be exceeded. The rest depends on how fast the new business model can be expanded. The Company can be said to be in a remarkable phase.

There is no parallel to PC DEPOT's business model even in overseas markets. Based on Digital Consultants for all homes, how should the Company upgrade its subscription-type business model from SaaS to a platform-type service. Its Phase 2 efforts to develop it in earnest are about to begin.

#### **Priority measures: Acquisition of new NCS members**

As measures for the current term, President Nojima stresses the following three points. The first measure is new member acquisition. This is supported by the fact that the necessary human resources have already been developed as well as the shift to the New Lifestyle to control coronavirus infection, which will be a tailwind for the Company. The second measure is to strengthen recruitment because it will be easier to hire more employees since the number of job applicants is increasing. The Company is confident that newly hired employees can be trained within Works, and will strive to increase the number of Works. The third measure is store concept innovation. While the Company has pushed ahead with the shift to Smart Life, the current era is driving the Company still further. The Company plans to establish a new concept that will encompass new fields and create a new store design to embody this concept.

#### **Significance of increase in dividend: Upgraded shareholder special benefit plan**

The dividend for the term ended March 2021 was 13.5 yen with increase of 0.5 yen in the second half. For the current term, it is expected to be 14.0 yen. In the current term, the Company will make an up-front investment in human resources and marketing for shifting to the subscription-based business model. With this impact, the profit will decline approximately by 30% but President Nojima is not concerned about that at all. He is very confident that with subscription-based sales having already exceeded 50% of the entire sales, they will rise to 80% in the long term. Accordingly, his policy is to increase the dividend stably while not being concerned about the immediate profit decline.

The number of shareholders was 10,321 as of the end of March 2021, including individual shareholders and overseas investors who account for 28.8% and 9.0%, respectively, of the total

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shareholding. The Company reviewed the shareholder special benefit plan, hoping that the premium members will become shareholders and that the minor shareholders will be long-term shareholders. Accordingly, the Company upgraded the special benefit plan for the shareholders who own 200 shares, 400 shares or 1,000 shares. For example, the Company increased the benefit (i.e. entitlement to goods and services of the Company) for premium members, that is, increased the benefit for holders of 200 shares from 2,000 yen to 4,000 yen, the benefit for holders of 400 shares from 4,000 yen to 6,000 yen and the benefit for holders of 1,000 shares from 6,000 yen to 10,000 yen, while the benefit for holders of 100 shares remains 2,000 yen.

### **Shifting the business model for the chance to win**

The sales mix of the Company will continue to shift to more solution services, and the content of these services will also change. The Company's business model will continue to evolve and it will strengthen its service structure to match the customers' needs more, which will result in an even more robust system than before.

In this system, more demand for services will be captured and more repeat customers will be retained. Profit is therefore highly likely to recover and grow higher than before. Since the Company's fundamental business model is sound and solid, it is likely that the Company will post record profits in several years.

The Company's major shareholders include Tokio Marine Asset Management Co., Ltd. and Sumitomo Mitsui DS Asset Management Company, Limited. They seem to hold PC DEPOT stock in the small- and mid-capitalization stock portfolios of their actively managed funds for the medium- to long-term.

It is almost certain that the Company's business model will retain its niche existence after it overcomes this problem. The Company has been promoting a shift to a stock-type profit structure based on service sales. As the transformation of its business model through human resources training is now within sight, we have upgraded the Company's corporate rating to A. (Please refer to the front page for an explanation of corporate ratings.)

Based on a stock price of 429 yen as of June 18, 2021, PC DEPOT has PBR of 0.82, ROE of 5.3%, and PER of 15.3, with a dividend yield of 3.3%. As the Company's business expands due to enhanced services delivered to NCS members, an increase in new membership, and increasing net sales of solution services, ROE will exceed 10% and the stock price will be revised upward significantly in the medium to long run toward a market capitalization of 100 billion yen with the demand increase brought about by the cumulative effect of the planned proposals.

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