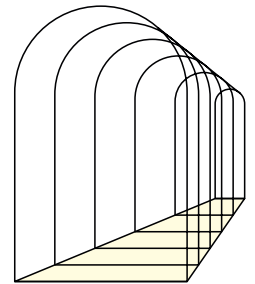


# Daiichi Sankyo Medicine Museum

Excerpt from the book "Welcome to the Corporate Museums -  
Attractiveness and Potential as a PR Asset" (Volume 2)

# Welcome to the Corporate Museums

Attractiveness  
and Potential  
as a PR Asset Vol.2



The ultimate owned media  
to tell your brand story

In-depth explanation of the corporate museum as a center for  
education, tourism, and innovation

## Changing the future of drug discovery and development through the “Joy of Medicine”

### Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri\* Museum

Location: Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Operation: Daiichi Sankyo Company, Limited

Opened: 2012

\*Kusuri is the Japanese word for medicine.



Entrance to the Kusuri Museum (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

#### Hands-on museum in the “Town of Medicine”

Nihonbashi, Tokyo, flourished during Japan’s samurai era due to its proximity to the Shogun’s Castle in Edo. Today, as a result of urban development, the district is now home to rows of modern skyscrapers. At the center of the district, which fuses traditional and modernity, is the neighborhood of Honcho. Its history as a pharmaceutical industry center dates back to its designation by Tokugawa Ieyasu as site for medicinal

wholesalers. Today, it is home to the headquarters of many pharmaceutical companies. Walking away from Nihombashi Mitsukoshi department store, one of the symbols of the area, and continuing through the rows of soaring buildings, you may suddenly find yourself outside a glass-fronted entrance covered with pop art images of pharmaceutical capsules. This is Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum. Daiichi Sankyo is a major pharmaceutical com-

pany born from the merger of Sankyo and Daiichi Pharmaceutical. As a corporate group, Daiichi Sankyo develops, manufactures and sells a wide range of different pharmaceutical products including both prescription pharmaceuticals, especially those for the treatment of cancer, and over-the-counter (OTC) products (medicines that can be purchased without a doctor’s prescription). Looking back, Sankyo has such a long history that the product Takadiastase, a digestive

enzyme that the company sold at the time of its foundation, was mentioned in author Natsume Soseki’s classic novel “I Am a Cat” (published 1905-06). In 2023, Daiichi Sankyo became the first company to receive approval for the manufacture and sale of a messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine to treat COVID-19. Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum, which is free to enter, opened in February 2012. The facility, which includes participatory exhibits, is based



Exhibit area on the second floor of the Kusuri Museum (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)



around the concept of “better getting to know medicine,” and it provides opportunities for visitors to learn how new drugs are developed and the mechanisms by which pharmaceuticals work. The Museum already has an annual visitor total well in excess of its original target of 10,000 people, and in 2022 celebrated reaching a cumulative total of 140,000 visitors in its first decade of operation. The Museum is divided into a first and second floor, covering a total floor area of 397.23 m<sup>2</sup>. As of 2024, visits to the Museum, which has four permanent staff, are by appointment only.

**Introducing pharmaceuticals through digital technology and hands-on exhibits**

Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum is very different from a typical corporate archive or museum. There are no objects or documents showcasing the company's history. Also, the futuristic space is occupied by a variety of digital content that includes large screens, digital games, and computer graphics. In other words, unusually for a corporate museum, the focus is on digital technology and the participant experience. Something else that sets the Museum apart from other similar facilities is a focus on the overall concept of “medicine” in general rather than the

specific history of the company and its products. In this way, the Museum provides children and adults alike with an opportunity to enjoy learning more about the world of pharmaceuticals, increasing their understanding of this highly specialized field, which is frequently unfamiliar to members of the public.

**See, listen and touch:  
Delve into the world of medicine!**

The Museum is divided into various themed zones including “Medicines and the Body,” “Types of Medicines,” and “How Medicines Work.” Each of these zones is further divided, with a total of 22 individual exhibits. Every visitor receives an IC chip-embedded token at the registration desk. Visitors then register their token using the capsule-shaped terminals (see earlier photo). As they view the exhibits, visitors can put the token at various designated places, pushing or rotating the token to reveal explanations that reveal the exhibit's secrets.

After completing the entry procedure, it is time to go in. Once inside the Museum, visitors feel as if they have entered a spaceship. The sense of anticipation builds. First up is the “Medicines and the Body” zone, which uses virtual imagery to explain the basic anatomy of the human body and



The reception desk on the Museum's second floor, where visitors register for their tour using the capsule-shaped terminals on the right of the image. (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)



Visitors use a token containing an IC chip to interact with the exhibits (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

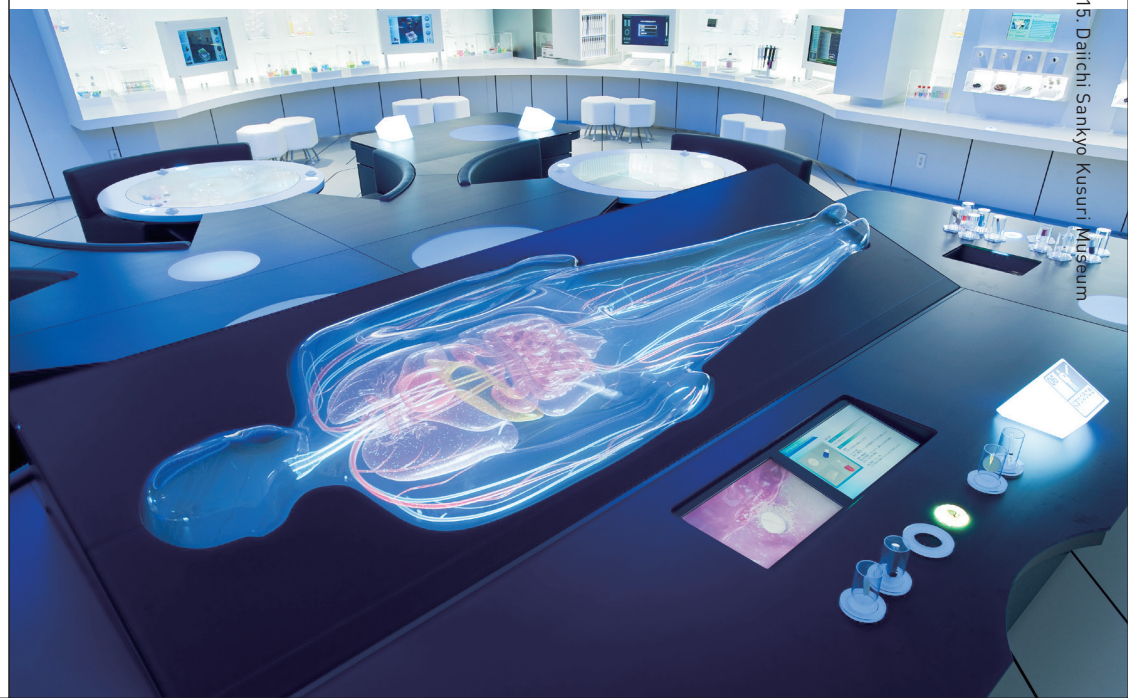


The “Medicines and the Body” exhibit zone (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

what happens to our bodies when we become ill. I was shown around the exhibit by Ken Usui, a Daiichi Sankyo Business Associate of the General Affairs Operations Department, who explained that “this whole zone is actually designed to represent the human digestive system”. If the route

through the Museum is designed to represent the digestive tract, then the visitors must be the “medicine” that travels into that tract. It becomes clear that the whole Museum space, not simply the content of the exhibits, is designed to create an adventurous foray into the world of medicine. We move onto the main exhibition space; the decor is coordinated mostly in white. The displays include models of pharmaceuticals, samples of the plants and other organisms that supply pharmaceutical ingredients, and experimental equipment. Overall, it feels rather like a laboratory. Each one of the individual exhibits within the zone is designed to function independently, and when visitors place their token in the prescribed place, the exhibit starts up and shows, for example, the appropriate game, quiz, or video content. One striking feature of the main exhibition space is a large transparent model of the human body. While this model, formed in plastic and brightly lit, mainly in white, at first appears simply to represent a person lying on the floor, it is actually

The “Medicinal Paths” exhibit (Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)



a key part of the “How Medicines Work” exhibit zone. Selecting a particular type of medicine, such as an oral medicine, injection, or suppository, highlights the appropriate areas of the gastrointestinal system and internal organs to show how each respective drug moves around the body, showing the complete path travelled from entry to exit.

The exhibits include an excellent range of gaming content. One exhibit, on how medicines work, includes a round table that allows visitors to play an adversarial game to learn about the benefits of specific medicines in treating particular diseases. Choosing, for example, “heart attack” starts up a game called “cholesterol collection contest,” where the players compete to collect and eliminate the excess cholesterol that resides in blood vessels and causes heart attacks, trying to return the cholesterol to normal levels. Other games include “drug design,” a three-dimensional puzzle in which players have to put together an optimum drug compound, and a screening game,

in which players need to find compounds that can act as useful drugs. These games help Museum visitors experience and understand the drug discovery process.

It is worth noting that all of these exhibits allow individual users to select the drugs and diseases they are interested in. Both the games and the quizzes have many sequences that include choice; each choice creates a path towards new knowledge and discovery. This approach helps to an experience of the breadth and depth of the pharmaceutical industry, even within a limited space, while also helping repeat visitors to the Museum to continually find something new.

**Video content produced through cooperation  
with different parts of the organization**

The Museum’s “Medicine Theater” is characterized by its wide variety of available video content. The huge screen, which covers three walls, presents various shows including “The Future of Medicine” and “Medicine and Nihonbashi”.



The “How Medicines Work” exhibit zone[Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo]



The Medicine Theater”(Photo courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

The films were created with the cooperation of the various specialist departments within the company. For example, the new film “Vaccines to protect people from infectious diseases” which was first shown in March 2023, was produced in cooperation with the company’s vaccine development department.

Pharmaceuticals are not the only area covered by the Museum. The exhibits also shine a spotlight on the workers whose job it is to produce those medicines. One example of such content is the employee interviews available for view at the theater. Videos feature employees in various different roles including researchers and MRs (the employees who provide information to physicians about available treatments), giving us a rare opportunity to hear details about these roles and how the employees involved feel about the task of drug discovering, producing and selling drugs. As mentioned earlier, the Museum content does not focus on the history of the company, but instead provides a unique insight into the current operations of Daiichi Sankyo by harnessing the specialist knowledge and experience of its

employees to produce a diverse range of content with covering the company’s whole organization. While the content of the movies on show at the theater are designed to be seen by people outside the company, Hirofumi Usui, of Daiichi Sankyo’s Procurement Management Department, told me that “broadcasting our work to people outside the company helps employees feel pride in their jobs”. That way, the Museum also serves as a means of internal publicity, helping increase employees’ motivation and contributing to feelings of unity and camaraderie within the workforce.

**Changing the public perception of medicine**

So far, we have looked at the various exhibits, which are all extremely entertaining and of very high-quality. Given the high standard, it is surprising that the Museum is free to enter. This raises the question, why does Daiichi Sankyo provide this facility? What are their goals and what does the Museum mean to the company? Speaking to the Daiichi Sankyo Group employees who cooperated with this feature about the com-



pany's motivation for establishing the Museum, they explained that the decision was affected by factors including the mandatory introduction of education on pharmaceuticals in junior high school, and the growing diversification of the ways that the general public purchases medicine. Both of these developments raise public expectations of education and information disclosure about pharmaceuticals. The company decided to take advantage of the situation to open the Museum as one part of its social contribution, hoping to generate greater understanding and trust in not only Daiichi Sankyo but in the pharmaceutical industry as a whole, while also injecting some more energy into the area around Nihonbashi. When establishing the facility, the company focused on the key concept of "the Joy of Medicine," the idea being to provide a place where visitors could learn about how drugs are made and how they work while enjoying themselves.

When you hear the word "medicine," what impression does it create in your mind? Before visiting the Museum, my impression of medicine

was that taking oral medicine can be difficult and leave a bad taste, while some creams can sting. I would just take medicine that I was told to take without really knowing much about it. If I had to say whether it was something I liked or didn't like, I would choose the latter. In other words, my opinion was generally negative, and I would assume that many adults also feel the same way. That is why Daiichi Sankyo is working to change the public perception of medicine. Through the Museum's content, which includes games and videos, and through the clever design of the overall space, the Museum succeeds in making medicines interesting, while also encouraging us to think about individual questions such as why different medicines come in different shapes and how medicines are produced. As we find the answers, our view of medicine becomes more positive, and we start to think of medicine as a more familiar topic.

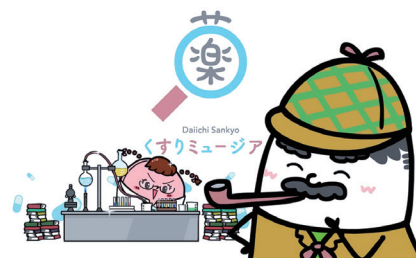
The Museum's logo accurately captures the company's desire to achieve a perception change. The logo features the Japanese character for "medicine," which actually contains the character for "enjoyment" as one of its parts. Perhaps helping us to realize the enjoyment contained within medicine is the greatest value and most important significance provided by the Museum.



Daiichi Sankyo Museum logo (Image courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

#### A museum for everyone with unique features

Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum also features two mascot characters, James, a detective who can uncover the mysteries of 1000 pharmaceuticals, and James' assistant Kusurina (the latter is a play on words, taking "kusuri," the Japanese



Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum mascots  
From left: "Kusurina" and "James" (Image courtesy of Daiichi Sankyo)

word for medicine, and turning it into a female name). The mascots provide easy-to-understand explanations to people, including children, who are starting to learn about pharmaceuticals, in the Museum's materials and on the company's website. Visitors can take photographs of the mascots in various locations in the Museum, in addition to purchasing a range of price for merchandise that features the two characters.

In Japan, it is not unusual for companies and products to have their own mascots, but a corporate museum mascot is more uncommon. However, using mascots is a particularly effective approach when trying to communicate ideas that are perceived to be difficult. Personable characters that we find easy to get to know can help people, particularly children, who do not know so much about medicine, feel a sense of familiarity with the topic, making the world of medicines feel more accessible.

The company's determination to make the Museum accessible to everyone can be seen in other areas too. For example, alongside the Japanese information labels, labels in English and Chinese are on hand to help visitors from overseas. The company website also publishes some of the Museum's visual content to as an online museum experience to reach those who cannot visit in person. Since pharmaceuticals are something that affect us all, the company believes in the importance of an inclusive approach, rather than focusing on a specific tar-

get audience. The Museum truly embodies their policy.

#### Passing the baton of drug development on into the future

Passing the baton of drug development on into the future  
From my perspective (as the author of this piece) visiting Daiichi Sankyo Kusuri Museum felt like the first time in my life I had the opportunity to think deeply about the world of medicine. It showed me the immense variety of drug discovery and manufacturing processes, and the depth of the commitment pharmaceutical companies have to taking on the related challenges.

Only one in 30,000 pharmaceutical developments are said to succeed. It can take between nine and 17 years to develop a medicine, with thousands or even tens of thousands of people involved in the process. These numbers are larger than for most product development, with time and labor requirements that are equivalent to, or perhaps even larger than, the development of a rocket or space shuttle. When we hear how each one of the several tens of thousands of people involved are fulfilling their own responsibility, and we see how the baton of drug development is passed on eventually resulting in each individual dose of medicine, we can see how the medicines we hold in our hand are a remarkable invention. The very size of drug development projects is one reason why it is extremely important in the pharmaceutical industry to train capable human resources. The pharmaceutical industry constantly faces human resources issues, and the Kusuri Museum is one attempt to address that issue. A childhood visit to the Museum and the experience of the "Joy of Medicine" may spark an interest in studying pharmacology, contributing to the future availability of people who will help move the pharmaceutical industry forward in future. A museum that encourages visitor participation is, in this way, a forward step in social innovation. Seeing for myself the enjoyment on the faces of the children visiting the Museum, I felt hope for the future of drug development.

This is a re-edited version of an article that appeared in the series "The Future of Corporate Museums as PR Assets" on the Web Densho (<https://dentsu-ho.com/>). Please note that the information on the facilities listed here is current as of the time of the interview (2024) and may have changed since then. Please contact the facility for the latest information.

■ **Daiichi Sankyo Pharmaceutical Museum**

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