

REPORT: The potential of Marunouchi for urban area-wide MICE by CHANGE to HOPE 2022



CHANGE to HOPE 2022 was a two-day event that took place in Marunouchi area in October 2022. It was hosted by the news platform NewsPicks (<https://NewsPicks.com/>). For two days, over 30 talk events and sessions were held in nine locations in the area containing Marunouchi-Nakadori Street—the main street space in Marunouchi—with Tokyo Kaikan and My Plaza Hall as the center stages. This event that permeated the entire Marunouchi area not only became an excellent example of urban area-wide MICE, but also demonstrated the diverse potential for area management.

● Events that probe hope for the future



“The idea behind this CHANGE to HOPE 2022 event was about the strategy to connect the power of change with a hope.” Yusuke Inagaki, Co-Chief Executive Officer of NewsPicks, Inc., states in an exclusive interview (second part of this article) that it is a “broad framework with an enduring theme.” In this day and age where so many things are bleak and it is hard to be hopeful for the future, this is a message to look for signs of change to discover sources for hope.

The CHANGE to HOPE website says the following:

“We will not give up on Japan. We will not give up on new business or self actualization. We will kindle the light of hope from Marunouchi, the center of the Japanese economy, and restore our confidence.”

In that sense, Professor Steven Pinker from Harvard University who gave the keynote speech was the perfect person for the role. There were over 90 speakers in all and over 4,000 people registered, with 2,050 participating on-site over the two days. The speech sessions were also livestreamed.



For the venues, the entire Marunouchi area was broadly divided into the Change Stadium and the Connected Area. The Change Stadium included the Tokyo Kaikan and the Meiji Yasuda Life Building. The main banquet hall on the third floor of the Tokyo Kaikan and the My Plaza Hall were the stages for the keynote speech and other speech programs. The Connected Area consists of the Marunouchi Building, the Mitsubishi Shoji Building, Mitsubishi Building, and the Kishimoto Building was the stages for talk sessions and workshops as well as other programs and events for communication and networking. Marunouchi-Nakadori Street was made part of the venue under the name HOPE Street and offered not only a place to eat, drink, and take a break, but also exhibits and talk sessions.

The structure of the events covering the whole area, allowing participants to walk from venue to venue, was also a unique feature of CHANGE to HOPE. For example, for the session given by Thomas Bowman, chef of food tech company Eclipse Foods that makes ice cream from plant-based ingredients (Session Title: Sustainable Ice Cream Revolutions sparked by a Michelin star chef), Mr. Bowman first spoke about plant-based alternative proteins and related business at the My Plaza Hall and then moved to an event space called “Have a Nice TOKYO!” for a mixer event and tastings of the Eclipse Foods ice cream introduced in the session. In addition to Mr. Bowman, Aylon Steinhart, Co-founder of Eclipse Foods, also made a surprise appearance, adding excitement to the event.

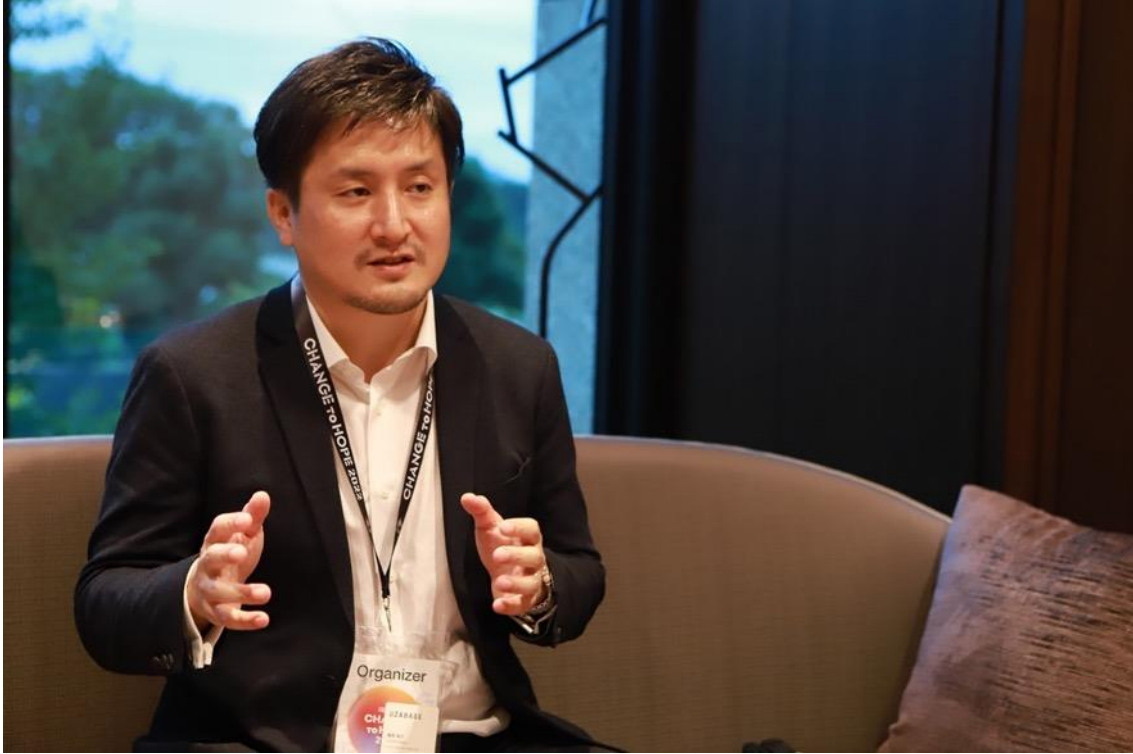


Thomas Bowman, a renowned chef who has previously received three stars from Michelin, made a speech at My Plaza Hall



Tasting and mixer event at Have a Nice TOKYO!
(Bottom right) Aylon Steinhart in the center.

● Healthy metabolism and energization



We asked NewsPicks' Mr. Inagaki about CHANGE to HOPE and urban area-wide MICE.

——What was the reason and meaning for holding CHANGE to HOPE in Marunouchi?

“To move the economy, it is important for many people to come together and for us to facilitate encounters and create business opportunities. This means more than just making friends at a bar; I felt that it being a place for business and the sharing of experiences at an event could lead people in the right direction. This is something that I experienced at the West Ship business conference in Osaka (November 2021), and we decided to bring that experience to Marunouchi that is a major central business district and the epicenter of the Japanese metropolitan economy. We focused on Marunouchi as it offers promise for globalization while also functioning as a community-connected hub. I believe that Marunouchi is an important piece that can link all of Japan with the rest of the world and revitalize the economy.”

——What mechanism did you use to have people circulate through the area?

“While having multiple venues can increase capacity, the key point is being able to generate encounters. Moving through the venue just a little, you also run into friends, acquaintances, and all sorts of people who you greet or exchange business cards with, and it takes a while to get where you are heading (laugh). This in and of itself is meaningful. Exhibition centers are no more than an exhibition place and do not tend to create these kinds of encounters. I had always wanted to take over an area like Marunouchi. I consulted DMO TOKYO Marunouchi about three years ago and my dream finally became a reality.”

—— In terms of the community design and space design, what points did you focus on?



During the event period, many participants could be seen in the streets holding CHANGE to HOPE event merchandise.

“We are still in the trial-and-error phase, but we focused on utilizing the unique characteristics of the spaces, mixing up elements based on our image of the space that will be the venue. Taking this event for example, the classic Tokyo Kaikan covers a broad range of people and the My Plaza Hall is stylish and edgy.

As for the community, NewsPicks has 190,000 paying members and seven million non-paying members. It is difficult to manage a huge community without it falling into chaos and coming apart. I think the key is to set themes and rules and to assign community managers. Our process for choosing “Change to hope” as our theme was that we wanted something that was not too narrow or too vague

and that was enduring.

As communities become more densely packed, their outlook tends to narrow and become rigid, similar to the case with recommendations. What is important is to add noise to optimized recommendations and create a certain type of circulation to promote healthy metabolism and energy. This time, we also used the strength of the space and developed the event through trial and error. For example, it would be difficult to divide up an exhibition center and try to promote the flow of community and energy because, ultimately, the space is too uniform. Using the whole area as our field allowed us to make truly distinct venues. I think physically separating the venues vividly changed the atmosphere in an interesting way.”

——What are your thoughts about urban area-wide MICE and the potential for forming communities?

“I don’t think any startups like NewsPicks has moved to Marunouchi, and I feel like Marunouchi is in the very moment of transforming. Within the context of major companies and startups, the two rarely crossed paths and, even if they did, the partnerships rarely brought the startups any profits or immediately turned them into a subcontractor. This was the problem. When they mix normally, they lose their color, and it is important for them to mix without either losing their color.

We must also set up some kind of base and put on events to allow all types of people to meet and interact. I feel that taking this kind of action boosts communication and generates culture.”

● Urban Area-wide MICE changes Marunouchi





In addition to eight venues, Marunouchi-Nakadori Street was also a main stage for CHANGE to HOPE. Tickets could be redeemed for coffee at food trucks and cafés lining the street, promoting the movement of people, and one part of Marunouchi-Nakadori Street was also used to hold exhibits and short events in partnership with the local community.





During the event period, CHANGE to HOPE took over the event signs, maps, posters, and other outdoor advertisements, coloring the whole Marunouchi area with its spirit and boosting excitement. The whole area was decked out, making it a very lively event. More than simply displaying banners and advertisements, we utilized the unique features of the different parts of the area and stages to recognize and promote each other, creating what could be an example of an event space that blends the community and the events.

Activities to utilize the whole area in this way were achieved with assistance from OMY (Otemachi, Marunouchi, and Yurakucho) Area Management Association (known as Ligare). The association organizes the DMO TOKYO Marunouchi office and Marunouchi-Nakadori Street, the iconic street space in the Marunouchi area, and promotes area management using the street space and outdoor advertising. Ligare's experience in using the street space and outdoor advertising was what made this blending possible.

During CHANGE to HOPE, the Marunouchi atmosphere was temporarily transformed with stripe patterns in the NewsPicks theme colors and more younger people walking through the streets. Urban Area-wide MICE has the potential to change the whole Marunouchi area. This was the impression from those two days.

● The roles DMO TOKYO Marunouchi and Ligare played and future possibilities

DMO TOKYO Marunouchi shared a long time for planning this event with NewsPicks, and many of the ideas from DMO TOKYO Marunouchi and Ligare were injected for the event. Those ideas were not limited to typical area management like advertisements, banners, and mobile billboards, but also included new concepts to organically create an area-wide connection.

- Set up venues that combine buildings and streets to facilitate use of Marunouchi-Nakadori Street as a space for communication between event speakers and visitors
- Link the streets and buildings to foster a sense of area-wide unity
- Request the cooperation of landowners to develop a lateral organization across buildings and venues
- Components like advertisements and mobile billboards that surpass the existing boundaries for use of the streets were a new undertaking achieved with the help of Ligare that has vast experience working with Chiyoda City and other government entities over many years

In particular, to create a unified area vibe, various ideas were tested out using Ligare's expertise in the use of public spaces to create a new format. As mentioned in the interview with Mr. Inagaki, we have not seen many examples of developing events that connect buildings and create a sense of area-wide unity. CHANGE to HOPE 2022 can be considered a model case in which collaboration between DMO TOKYO Marunouchi and NewsPicks achieved a strong sense of unity throughout the whole area based on a strong understanding of the characteristics of the local area and the venues.

In essence, CHANGE to HOPE 2022 was like a work of art co-created by NewsPicks and DMO TOKYO Marunouchi over the area. We can look forward to more works of art that add fun and excitement throughout the area.