

Why Green Productivity?

The starting line was productivity as a cost-reduction strategy. By picking up the baton of quality, productivity has metamorphosed to incorporate environmental protection and community enhancement as a means to increase prosperity. Under the umbrella of Green Productivity, innovation, a key engine of economic growth, becomes part of a holistic strategy to move towards a sustainable future.

Productivity is essentially a marathon without a finishing line.

Just as productivity was the essential strategy that enabled Japan to rebuild after the Second World War, with other Asian nations being attracted to the lure of its success, the 19 member economies of the Asian Productivity Organization have rallied behind a more broadly defined concept of productivity to race in the marathon for sustainability.

In "The Concept of Productivity and the Aim of National Productivity Agencies" formulated in Rome in 1959 the Productivity Committee of the European Productivity Agency defined productivity as follows:

"Productivity is above all a state of mind. It is an attitude that seeks the continuous improvement of what exists. It is a conviction that one can do better today than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than today. Furthermore it requires constant efforts to adapt economic activities to ever-changing conditions and the application of new theories and methods. It is a firm belief in the progress of humanity."

Green Productivity starts with an intellectual dare – to shift from a monochrome bottom line to a more colourful triple bottom line.



Green Productivity is a strategy for simultaneously enhancing productivity and environmental performance. Its aim is well-rounded socio-economic development that leads to sustained improvement in the quality of human life. It is the combined application of appropriate productivity and environmental management tools, techniques and technologies that reduce the environmental impact of an organization's activities, products and services while enhancing profitability and competitive advantage.

In 1994, the APO launched its Special Program for Environment, under a special grant from the Japanese Government, to help member economies integrate environmental concerns into their productivity enhancement work. The Environment Department, under which the program is administered, fosters the greening of productivity enhancements through three main activities: promotion, demonstration and dissemination. A special focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) was taken in recognition of the important role they play in economic development, environmental degradation and the lack of resources and expertise that generally limits their advancement.

In 1996, the Asian Productivity Organization tabled its strategy to meet this challenge head on - through Green Productivity. At the December 1996 World Conference on Green Productivity held in Manila, the APO demonstrated empirical evidence that it had found a way to move sustainable development from the possible to the practical.

Green Productivity has already proven to be as effective in the boardroom as it is on the shop floor.

The universality of its application should not be underestimated.

SMEs are the backbone of most national economies. GP's "Success in six" steps offer SMEs the chance for competitive advantage by doing better with less.

