

Strategic management consultancy: focus on assisting SMEs

The APO, in collaboration with the Japan Productivity Center (JPC), has been organizing training courses on management consultancy-related topics since 1964 as one of its core topics. Strengthening and promoting the development of SMEs is an APO strategic direction, as SMEs play a crucial role in the economies of all countries. However, most SMEs do not have the in-house capacity to develop and exercise strategic management to improve their immediate and long-term competitiveness. They therefore need external consultants to provide guidance and assistance in this area.

Most NPOs continue to be in the forefront of providing productivity consultancy services to enterprises of all sizes within the region, and increasing their ability to assist in putting strategic management in place in SMEs is crucial. Areas in which NPOs must be adept include helping SMEs to formulate improvement plans; identifying operational deficiencies and prioritizing opportunities for improvement; and developing and guiding the implementation of practical, cost-effective management solutions to enhance the productivity and profitability and ultimately sustain the growth of SMEs.

The APO and JPC held a training course on Strategic Management Consultancy for SMEs in Japan, 17–28 October 2011. Eighteen participants from 17 member countries, who represented NPOs, SMEs, and the government/public sector, attended the two-week course. They were introduced to the overall framework of management consultancy in Japan; observed overall management function and analysis in SMEs; acquired integrated analytical consulting techniques in the major functional areas of production, marketing, and human resources development; and made site visits to observe best practices of strategic management in the SME sector. All participants presented strategic plans for a consultancy client in the first week of the course, which were gradually refined based on new insights gained and



Site visit at Mirai Industry Co., Ltd.

presented during the final days. Six experts from the JPC and Thailand facilitated the training activities.

Participants visited Meidoh Co. Ltd., a winner of the 1998 Total Productive Maintenance Prize and 2010 Deming prize, in Aichi prefecture to learn about total quality management and marketing. The Ogaki Plant of Mirai Industry Co. Ltd., which produces electric wiring materials in Gifu prefecture, demonstrated its unique corporate management system for employee motivation. The Nagoya Plant of Asahi Breweries Ltd., Aichi prefecture, allowed participants to examine its customer-focused marketing strategies combined with environmental conservation efforts. Sankyo Kogyo Co., a manufacturer of nuts and bolts in Nagoya, explained its lean production system and how each employee understands customer expectations. ☺