Information to Make a Difference in Productivity

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p. 5, Seminar, Nepal

p. 6, Study mission, ROC

p. 8, JPC seminar, Japan

CONTENTS

APO manuals add value to the productivity clearinghouse

One of the key roles of the APO is to serve as a clearinghouse for information on productivity. A vital part of its information program is publications that propagate and disseminate knowledge and information on the productivity concept, its socioeconomic significance, and the tools and techniques for its enhancement.

Most APO publications are report format titles. Projects on current issues relevant to member countries are selected, and the proceedings and resource and country papers are published. Special publications cater to specific needs to assist member countries in their productivity endeavors. They include the proceedings of special events and the annual *APO Productivity Databook* and *Eco-products Directory* series. In 2008, the APO started the publication of manuals to provide practical guidance and hands-on advice on specific topics based on major project findings and expert discussions.

"Six manuals have been published since July 2008. Five are on Green Productivity (GP)-related topics, including two on energy, and the other is on food safety management. Currently three manuals are in production," said Secretariat Information Officer Sunju Lee, who is in charge of APO publications. "All of the published manuals are written in simple English to allow the contents to be absorbed with relative ease. Secretariat officers in charge of the projects are involved in preparation and finalization of the contents."

Most GP manuals detail the outcome of Industry Department projects. Secretariat Industry Program Officer K.D. Bhardwaj explained that these manuals strengthen the APO's information program since the contents are drawn from interactions among participants and resource speakers who practice the techniques. He also stressed the importance of these manuals as project follow-up. "These are very useful for face-to-face programs after an e-learning course or for individual-country programs following multicountry projects. Participants can study the major points, key findings, and discussion contents of the previous project before attending. Therefore the follow-up can focus on more advanced topics."

The *Working Manual on Energy Auditing in Industries* and *Biomass as Fuel in Small Boilers* have proved useful references for participants in follow-up projects. The energy auditing manual was based on the workshop on Energy Efficiency and GP, organized by the APO and National Productivity Council, India, and a subsequent Web-based project on Energy Management in 2007. The author, Arvind Kumar Asthana, a resource speaker in both projects, included step-by-step methodology for energy audits and instructions for detailed energy audits in industries. The manual has been used as reference for all participants in energy-related APO projects, including the recent e-learning course on Energy Auditing completed in early July.

(Continued on page 5)

France's agile ANACT

France was one of the first countries to dismantle its national productivity center (in 1968, the year of great societal unrest). Earlier it had been one of the last recipients of Marshall Plan aid to create that institution. Not least of the reasons was French trade unions' dislike of the word "productivity" and their less-than-enthusiastic cooperation with employers to improve it. Yet France's productivity performance has been world-class. Perhaps confrontation begets competitiveness.

"By optimizing workplace organization it is possible to improve the quality of work, as well as employees' creativity and innovation and thus to increase productivity."

On the other hand, growing recognition of the importance of human capital in national competitiveness has been translated into a range of legal requirements that employers, managers, and workers must meet in all but small companies. Thus, the skills of the workforce should be raised by levying training taxes; and company-level labor-management cooperation is mandatory, as is the employment of disabled persons, etc. To help implement such laws, two new agencies arose from the ashes of the productivity center. One agency fostered management education, in which today France is a European leader; the other has broadened and clarified the supply of life-long learning in the wake of the training laws.

A third body, established in the early 1970s, was added to promote improvements in working conditions and, more broadly, the quality of working life. It was this third agency, Agence Nationale pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail (ANACT), that took up France's baton in the European productivity movement. It fully concurs with the EU's 2006 Helsinki Declaration: "By

optimizing workplace organization it is possible to improve the quality of work, as well as employees' creativity and innovation and thus to increase productivity." Productivity, in other words, is not its goal but a requisite by-product.

ANACT has the prime characteristics of a national productivity center, albeit with certain Gallic accents. Thus it has a tripartite governing council, but, as a state agency, it is the government that appoints the director, provides its income (€20 million annually, with four-year contracts), and has the final say in the agency's activities. Employers might show some signs of reluctance to play along with its somewhat social focus on "working conditions," but on the other hand they can emphasize the required economic dimensions of social change. ANACT's work can provide employers with guidance in implementing new working life rules and regulations by, for example, pioneering pilot projects.

Importantly, ANACT keeps its nose to the ground. In other words, its focus is experimental change projects within companies. Actions for individual large enterprises are carried out by the 80-strong central staff on such key socioeconomic issues as problems of the aging workforce, stress, absenteeism, and musculoskeletal disorders. Since market rates for consultancy are charged, projects provide a regular source of the total revenues of ANACT. However, to ensure a balance of activity and not be tempted solely by projects because they provide juicy income, the council has set a 10% ceiling on this source in any year. The key purpose of such assignments is to provide ANACT with an up-to-date window on the world of work and how best to nurture and harness human potential.

"A recent innovation to broaden and heighten general and media awareness of ANACT and its missions is an annual week focusing on one aspect of improving the quality of working life."

ANACT's 25 regional bodies, Agences Regionale pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail, conduct experimental activities for smaller firms. They were set up and partially financed (using one-third of the central government's annual grant) by ANACT together with regional government units in the 1980s and 1990s as mirror images of the national agency. But their 220-odd staff, unlike the center's, have a more flexible status than state employees. Projects, usually lasting one year, bring together up to 50 smaller firms confronted with similar working life issues. Although locally managed, with an individual industry focus, the expertise of the total ANACT network, particularly of the center, is tapped.

For both types of projects considerable importance is attached to broadcasting the results. Two aspects are particularly important: first, information needs to be easily understandable by people in working life, and therefore staff specialists are required to produce popularized pamphlets, in double-quick time; and second, information must heighten the whole network's image in the community. A recent innovation to broaden and heighten general and media awareness of ANACT and its missions is an annual week focusing on one aspect of improving the quality of working life. In 2009, the week examined stress, an economic and social bane affecting at least 40% of the French working population. Thus, what can be done to alleviate stress is equally of interest to employers and trade unions. More than 100 events were held across the coun-

try, with the focal one being a national conference attracting 1,500 participants in June.

If ANACT as such is not, nor should it be, a research body disseminating erudite papers, it must, like productivity centers, become more involved in training and higher education. Thus in addition to offering a score of courses in its focal areas, it has recently set up a diploma course in work management jointly with a university, attracting some 400 participants. Also like productivity centers, ANACT has seized opportunities for developing resources that the state or even the social partners have experienced trouble in managing. Thus ANACT has become adept at tapping the funds accumulated from the taxes levied on firms if they do not employ a sufficient proportion of the disabled or provide their workers with sufficient training for their own projects. A national fund, Fonds pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail (FACT), was set up in the 1980s to provide companies with seed money to try to resolve common problems in working conditions which are not covered by law. Because of heavy bureaucracy, the annual funds were never consumed. Now that ANACT has taken over their handling, all is appropriately spent. The monies in question are not negligible: FACT's annual budget is €3 million.

Finally, ANACT is a fan of evaluations. Not only are these required by the government but, even more important, they are sought by staff. Recently, their focus has shifted from activity to impact: how much transfer has taken place, how many consultants have been trained, how many hits have there been on the Web site on which items, etc. The Web site is seen as the means of providing visitors with all the necessary information in a nutshell along with sources of more detailed information if needed.

Anthony C. Hubert is President of EuroJobs, an organization he established to promote efforts to raise the quality of working life and productivity in Europe. He was formerly Secretary-General of the European Association of National Productivity Organizations. He writes regularly for this column.

Comment board

Lecturer on Quality Management ***Le Ngoc Liem****, Department of Business Administration, Hue University, Vietnam.*
Participant, national training workshop on the Food Safety Management System ISO22000 for the Seafood Industry, Vietnam, 26–29 May 2009.
"I agree with the other 47 workshop participants that the workshop met our expectations in that it had informative contents, resourceful speakers, and good logistical management. All the presentations and lecture materials were translated into our local language which helped us to understand the topics easily. As a lecturer on quality management, my objective in attending the workshop was to enhance my knowledge of ISO22000 by looking into all the up-to-date ideas and information on offer. I can then share what I learned with my students, especially part-time students who are working for enterprises in the field. The site visit to a company with ISO22000 certification was an interesting experience, and I hope that the organizers will arrange more site visits and case studies in future projects."

Deputy Director General ***K.G. Varshney****, National Productivity Council, India.*
Resource speaker, in-country training program for the Development of Productivity Practitioners, Fiji, 25 May–5 June 2009.
"All the participants were very keen on learning more about productivity tools and techniques, all of which they can use in their work as trainers and consultants. They appreciated the usefulness of the productivity and quality improvement skills such as 5S, kaizen, quality control circles, QC tools, office productivity, visual control systems, TPM, TQM, etc. Many of those topics seemed new to the participants. Despite this, all the participants were very active in taking part in the whole program including solving case studies or group discussions, role playing, business games, factory visits, and others. I believe that with the new knowledge and skills, they will be able to enhance their contribution to industry. But at the same time, they should also make efforts to specialize in the concepts and techniques by attending more courses dealing with advanced skills."

Deputy Executive Director ***Jose Maria S. Batino****, Occupational Safety and Health Center, Department of Labour and Employment, Philippines.*
Participant, training course for Certified Lead Auditors for the Occupational Health and Safety Management System: OHSAS18001:2007, Indonesia, 22–26 June 2009.
"My objective in attending the course was to improve my understanding of the detailed requirements of OHSAS 18001:2007. At first, I was not that interested in the idea of possibly having a certificate of accreditation as an auditor for OHSAS 18001. However, after I understood the requirements of OHSAS 18001, the details of the audit process, and the roles of an auditor, I said to myself "why not?" I found that all areas/topics in the course including the role-playing sessions were interesting. The examination that the participants took on the last day of the program was also very relevant. It was encouraging to see that all of us made a serious effort to get high marks on the exam. In my work, I am involved in many aspects of occupational safety and health, such as training, research, information dissemination, and provision of technical services. The OHSAS 18001:2007 is a very sound reference that I can use in the performance of my work. I also believe that organizations should now direct their efforts toward implementing occupational safety and health management systems, and the OHSAS should be able to guide them in their continual improvement in this area."

Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Benchmarking: Capturing best practices for breakthrough improvements—Kabir Ahmad Mohd. Jamil

Introduction

It is often said that "If we don't know where we are going, we might end up somewhere else" and "Those who benchmark do not have to reinvent the wheel." There is a lot of truth in both statements. Today, whether we are in the private or public sector, most of us are rightly concerned with our performance. However, while performance indicators give an indication of the level of performance that we are at, benchmarking can pinpoint specific areas of good or poor performance. This will enable us to seek improvements in those areas. Benchmarking also will eliminate trial and error in process improvements. In the competitive world of today, time is of the essence.

What is benchmarking?

In general, we can define benchmarking as a systematic process for comparing performance or processes in different organizations, or between different parts of the same organization, to learn how to do things better. The main purpose of benchmarking is to improve performance or service by identifying where changes can be made.

Benchmarking does not mean simply copying others' practices. It requires the organization to adapt and adopt what has been learned from others according to our organization's needs and cultural setting. It goes beyond comparison of the pricing or features of competitors' products or services. In benchmarking, we consider not only the result, but also the process and the practices that enable an organization to achieve superior performance.

Types of benchmarking

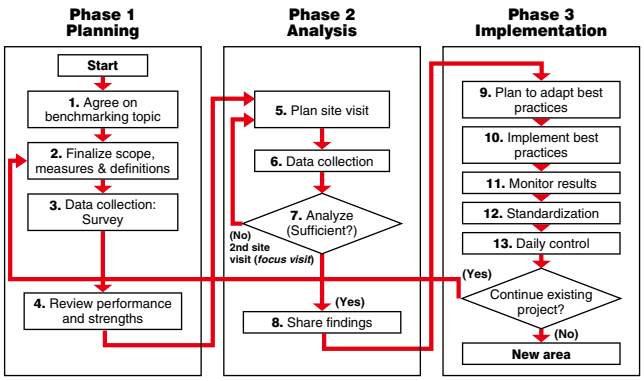
Generally, benchmarking initiatives can be categorized depending on the scope or the approaches the organization adopts to pursue the initiatives. They are:

- **Process benchmarking:** This focuses on improving specific critical processes and operations. It invariably involves a study of how top-performing organizations accomplish the specific process in question. Such studies can take in the form of research, surveys/interviews, and site visits.
- **Performance benchmarking:** This focuses on assessing competitive positions through comparing performance characteristics of the products and services of competitors. Benchmarking partners are mainly drawn from the same sector.
- **Internal benchmarking:** This is used to identify and compare one particular operation within the organization. The main advantages are that access to sensitive data and information is easier and usually less time and resources are needed.
- **Competitive benchmarking:** This is the process of comparing an operation with that of direct competitors. It provides opportunities for learning from those who are at the "leading edge." This benchmarking can take up significant time and resources and is the most difficult to carry out.
- **Functional benchmarking:** This is a process of comparing an operation with that of similar ones within or from different business sectors to find ways of improving functions or work processes.
- **Cooperative or collaborative benchmarking:** This is the most widely used type of benchmarking because it is relatively easy to conduct. Various organizations are invited to form a benchmarking group and share their best practices.

The benchmarking process

Benchmarking is a very structured process and generally can be organized into three main significant phases, as depicted in Figure 1. Before deciding to benchmark, an organization needs to review and determine what it wants to benchmark, as proposed in Phase 1. Phase 2 focuses on the performance analysis of the benchmark organization, identifying its best practices and reasons for its success. In phase 3, the best practices are adapted and adopted to close the performance gaps.

Figure 1. The benchmarking process



Source: Modified from the Malaysia Productivity Corporation COP Benchmarking Model.

Conclusion

Benchmarking can be complex or as simple as browsing through the annual reports of organizations and making comparisons. Any form of comparison can bring an insight into knowledge of our own level of performance. However, one of the biggest mistakes organizations make is to limit their benchmarking activity to their own industry. Benchmarking within an industry is essential. However, it is imperative to reach outside and beyond our own industry into other industries that perform a similar process in our journey toward breakthrough performance.

Contributed by Senior Manager of the Malaysia Productivity Corporation Kabir Ahmad Mohd. Jamil (e-mail: Kabir@mpc.gov.my), resource speaker for the APO training course on the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Advanced Program. Kabir has extensive experience in the field of operation and process improvement, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors.

For easy reference to productivity-related terms including methodologies, tools, and techniques, the APO developed the p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org). Definitions and explanations of benchmarking are given in the p-Glossary.

Erratum

The Ouput variable in Figure 1 in Mr. Kabir's second article on Six Sigma in the July issue was wrongly identified as *X* instead of *Y*.

Learning the essence of Japan's management of technology

In its continuous promotion of technology development and innovation in member countries, the APO, in collaboration with the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and Japan Productivity Center, organized a multicountry observational study mission on the Management of Technology (MOT), 22–26 June, in Japan. Senior technology managers, R&D researchers, and consultants heard lectures and case studies and made site visits to observe Japanese expertise in MOT, R&D, and innovative product management systems.

In the keynote lecture on The Role of MOT in Japan, Prof. Hiroshi Miyanaga, Tokyo University of Science, introduced the example of the Suica electronic cash card. Suica originated in 2001 as a prepaid card for train tickets on the East Japan Railway Company. It now can be used for travel and entertainment tickets, taxi fares, and purchases from vending machines, convenience stores, and other retailers. The Japanese e-money market currently tops ¥1 trillion, which is possible through contactless radiofrequency-identification technology developed by Sony. Prof. Miyanaga asserted that, "The essence of MOT is how to develop a concept from a simple prepaid to a multifunctional card."

Professor Robert Kneller, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology of the University of Tokyo, suggested establishing technology transfer offices (TLOs) in universities and research institutes. Major roles of TLOs are deciding which technologies or inventions are commercially viable, marketing them to private companies, and assisting in product-to-market development. That idea was attractive to many participants, especially those from government research institutes.

Participants visited four Japanese companies. CEO Seigo Honme of Elionix Inc., which is dominant in lithography and scanning electron microscopy, advised identifying niche markets through collaboration with major companies and

Professor Miyanaga (standing) introducing Japanese MOT

advanced research institutes. At Kao Corporation, a manufacturer of a variety of general consumer and chemical products, participants learned how a strong corporate culture generates innovative products. Under the motto "Consumers Decide on the Quality of the Products," Kao encourages all company divisions to participate in the process of product development. At Bayer CropScience Yuki Research Center, a world leader in crop protection, R&D Director Claude Lambert explained the active role of the marketing team in new product development. The visit to the Yokohama plant of Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. illustrated product management in a major corporation.

The mission ended with a half-day workshop in which participants exchanged views on how to apply advanced Japanese MOT systems in their own enterprises and countries.

APO manuals add value to the productivity clearinghouse

(Continued from page 1)

The biomass manual resulted from the regional workshop on Biomass Utilization for Industrial Boilers held in Pakistan in August 2008. Early in 2009, national dissemination seminars to follow up the regional workshop were organized in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The manual was disseminated at those seminars and were appreciated by the participants.

The three GP-related manuals are the *Green Productivity and Green Supply Chain Manual, RoHS Manual for SMEs*, and *Green Tourism Certification Manual*, which were published in August 2008, November 2008, and June 2009, respectively. While the latter two are the direct results of APO projects, the GP and green supply chain (GSC) manual is a compilation of preexisting information. "The purpose of this manual is to develop a user-friendly, hands-on, practice-oriented, comprehensive manual for integrating the GP concept and GSC best practices," stated Dr. Kun-Mo Lee, the volume editor.

The first Agriculture Department publication in the series is the *Food Safety Management Manual*, based on numerous APO projects dealing with the issue. The author, Yong Kok Seng, is a long-serving APO resource speaker on food safety. The manual also includes tips on how to make the most of the text, how to read each chapter, and a reading strategy. "The manual is so simple and easy that anyone can use it without additional guidance," commented Secretariat Program Officer Dr. Muhammad Saeed, who has conducted food safety projects in collaboration with Yong.

Participants at the Nepal dissemination seminar

"We are sure that our publications, including the new manuals, can give those who are interested or involved in specific fields new insights and perspectives. Given this, we are looking into how to disseminate this resourceful information to the widest audience," said Lee. APO publications are distributed to NPOs, university libraries, research institutes, government agencies, private-sector corporations, university faculty members, researchers, APO resource persons, and senior corporate executives. To reach out to a wider audience and make distribution of these valuable productivity resources easier, the APO has made them available in both print and e-book formats since 2003. The PDF format of these publications is available free of charge on the APO Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org). The APO hopes that its information program will assist all productivity practitioners worldwide in their endeavors.

Entrepreneurial agribusiness through innovation

"Business incubation is emerging as one of the most innovative instruments to support SME creation and development all over the world. The exceptionally fast growth of business incubators has to be replicated in the agribusiness sector," asserted APO resource speaker Dr. Kiran A. Sharma, International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics, India, during the recent APO multicountry observational study mission on Entrepreneurship and Agrotechnology/Agrobusiness Incubation held in the Republic of China (ROC), 22–26 June. The mission was organized in collaboration with the Council of Agriculture (COA), Executive Yuan, China Productivity Center, and National Chung Hsing University (NCHU) to help participants promote innovation in agriculture, enhance the capacity of agribusiness entrepreneurs, and create modern technology-based SMEs by learning from the experience of the host country.

The five-day mission was packed with information from overseas and local resource speakers. Director Steven Chiang, Agribusiness Incubator Program (AIP), University of Hawaii, USA, spoke on the "agripreneur" incubation approach of the AIP, which is customizable/flexible, fast, simple, and applicable by clients. The NCHU operates the Innovation and Incubation Center (IIC), a leading agrotechnology/agrobusiness incubator in the ROC. NCHU Vice President Dr. Yung-Sheng Huang explained that the IIC consists of a professional incubator team working in partnership with professors, incubator partners, and industry allies. NHCU Institute of Technology and Innovation Management Prof. Ta-June Lu reviewed government strategies to promote innovative technology and the ROC's innovation incubators. Local speakers Dr. Robert Lai, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Prof. Benjamin Yuan, National Chiao Tung University, spoke on government policies for innovation and in agriculture and the importance of knowledge-based innovation for future agricultural growth, respectively.

Site visits were made to seven technology/business incubators and their clients: the Innovation Incubator of the NCHU (IINCHU) that provides companies in technology-based industries with a service package comprising finance, marketing, public relations, mentoring, and international business support; Livestock Research Institute; Taiwan Orchid Plantation; the COA; IINCHU section in Taichung Science Park; Nankang Biotech Incubation Center; and 7th Taipei International Food Show.

Visiting the Taiwan Orchid Plantation, a public facility for orchid entrepreneurs

The study mission confirmed that the ROC's success in business incubation in the agriculture sector is primarily due to strong policy and institutional support, the provision of an environment conducive to generating and promoting innovation, and close linkages between universities, research institutes, and industry. After sharing information from each country, participants concluded that the concept of agrotechnology/agribusiness incubation is relatively new to the Asia-Pacific region. It was also noted that the roles and functions of incubators vary and depend on the level of development. The ROC's initiatives and methods for promoting innovation motivated participants to plan their own future activities.

KM to improve service-sector productivity

The father of knowledge management (KM) Peter Drucker once stated that, "In postcapitalism, power comes from transmitting information to make it productive, not from hiding it." Realizing that economic structures are shifting from primary commodities and goods-based production toward knowledge-intensive services, the APO has undertaken several KM projects. It has also developed an APO KM framework for SMEs. Efforts are ongoing to refine that framework for the service sector, which accounts for the largest share of the economy in the majority of member countries. A study meeting on KM in the Service Sector in Malaysia, 15−18 June, was therefore held to raise the overall productivity and performance of the service sector through the application of KM.

The four resource speakers included Monash University, Australia, Senior Lecturer Dr. Henry Linger and MPC Senior Director Ab. Rahim Yusuff. Dr. Linger outlined KM in the service sector with examples from Australia. Yusuff spoke on the significance of the service sector and KM in Malaysia. KDi Asia Director Praba Nair, Singapore, introduced the APO's KM framework approach and explained how service excellence and innovation could be enhanced with KM. He stated that, "KM practice can lead service efficiency to service excellence." Knowledge Management Division Chief Charity L. Tan, Department of Health, the Philippines, agreed, noting that, "The APO KM framework is very well crafted and comprehensive and should be of enormous assistance to organizations starting their own KM or which have already launched KM programs."

"Knowledge is the key strategic asset to be managed," said Young International Group CEO Ronald Young, of the UK, in his presentation on knowledge assets in both tacit and explicit forms. He stressed the necessity of establishing a platform to convert from the tacit to the explicit by mentoring and discussion. The healthcare industry KM case study he presented was appreciated by many participants as a clear blueprint showing how KM can be implemented in service enterprises.

Participants lauded APO efforts to develop a simple KM framework to encourage member countries to implement the concept. They discussed details of the four accelerators that help to propel organizational KM initiatives: leadership; people; process; and technology. Managing Director George Wong, Hoclink Systems and Services Pvt. Ltd., Singapore, said, "The study meeting helped me understand how KM should be implemented in organizations to complete initiatives undertaken over the years. This will enhance productivity and quality in line with innovative thrusts in the knowledge-based economy."

Program calendar

October

Sweden
Study mission to a Nonmember Country on Quality and Innovation, 5–9 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To learn from Swedish quality management experiences and provide firsthand exposure to the best Swedish practices in quality and innovation.

Germany
Multicountry observational study mission to a Nonmember Country on Exporting Processed Agrifood Products, 8–12 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To study the trends and developments in importing, wholesaling, and retailing of processed agrifood products in Germany and help participants develop their export promotion strategies.

Republic of China
Workshop on e-Waste Management, 12–16 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To review current e-waste generation, storage, processing, and disposal scenarios in member countries and evolve methods for the systematic management of e-waste using the Green Productivity approach.

Indonesia
Workshop on Benchmarking for Service Quality in the Public Sector, 12–16 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To enable participants to develop the capacity to provide quality services using the benchmarking methodology in the public sector.

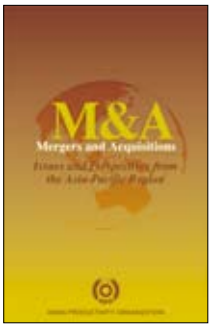
Lao PDR
Training course on Planning and Management of Agroprocessing Enterprises, 19–24 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To equip participants with tools and techniques for developing business plans for starting and managing agroprocessing enterprises.

Republic of China
Multicountry observational study mission on the Application of Advanced Technologies in Aquaculture, 19–23 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To observe and learn from the achievements of the host country in the field of green aquaculture industry.

Thailand
Study meeting on Lean Six Sigma for the Service Sector, 27–30 October 2009.
▶ Objective: To develop roadmaps deploying lean Six Sigma to address the specific needs of various sectors within the service industry.

Kindly contact your NPO for details of future activities, including eligibility for participation. The project details along with the address of your NPO are available from the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

New APO publication



MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

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ISBN: 92-833-7081-3 (e-edition)

Photo report

National Metal and Materials Technology Center researcher (R) explaining center activities
Workshop on Applications of Nanotechnology in the Food Industry, Bangkok, Thailand, 15–19 June 2009.

Seminar participant examining salak trees on a farm in Sleman district, Yogyakarta
Seminar on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Safety for Fruit Crops and Vegetables: Managing Food Quality, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 29 June–3 July 2009.

APO/NPO update

New APO Alternate Director for Lao PDR
Mr. Soutchay Sisouvong, Deputy Director of the Small Enterprise Promotion and Development Office, was appointed APO Alternate Director for Lao PDR, w.e.f. 1 August 2009.

NPO focus

Human-based management for the next society

The world economy has suffered greatly from the results of the global financial meltdown that began in the USA. Unemployment has increased as businesses downsize and few opportunities are available for those entering the job market. Japan is one country badly affected. However, some are trying to prepare for growth and success even in this difficult time. Industrial advisers and top and senior managers of major Japanese companies who attended this year's Karuizawa Top Management Seminar, 8–10 July, suggested "human capitalism management," or human-based management.

The Karuizawa Top Management Seminar is organized annually by the Japan Productivity Center (JPC), and the 2009 event was the 54th. In its long history, the Karuizwa seminar has introduced management philosophies, methodologies, and world economic trends to Japanese business and industry leaders. This year's theme was Human Capitalism Management for the Next Society. The event was attended by 140 private-sector corporate managers including 21 participants from the Republic of Korea led by Chairman and CEO of the Korea Productivity Center (KPC) Dr. Dong Kyu Choi. JPC Chairman Jiro Ushio, in the opening address, cautioned that, "We will not be able to see the 'clear sky' by just waiting for this storm to pass by itself." Ushio stressed the importance of human energy and dynamics in corporate management in the 21st century, which is the key to human capitalism management.

The three-day seminar featured presentations by industrial leaders, panel discussions, and a break-out session. Many speakers declared that today's hardships could be an opportunity to push for innovation and reform for future growth. However, success will depend on building relationships of trust with employees via human-based management.

Korean participants utilizing simultaneous interpretation during a presentation (photo courtesy of JPC)

President and Chief Executive Officer Shigenobu Nagamori, Nidec Corporation, in his presentation entitled Management by Passion, Enthusiasm, and Persistence, advised managers to take the initiative in working passionately to convince others to commit their passion and enthusiasm. Director Kanji Okubo of the Human & Management Research Institute, spoke on Management for Making People Happy and detailed how good companies make the happiness and growth of employees their first priority. Okubo also stated that companies should invest more in improving the work environment.

One of the highlights of this year's seminar was the participation of Korean CEOs and managers, a result of a Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration between the KPC and JPC. "It was a great opportunity for me to hear the ideas of top managers of big Japanese companies and challenges that they face. I believe this will help me advise Korean managers how to develop and allow their expansion to the global market," commented Dr. Choi of the KPC.

People behind the scenes: TDLC e-learning team

APO e-learning courses have flourished thanks to the advantages they offer in reaching a large audience in a timely, cost-effective manner. "…truly a productive endeavor from the APO, which deserves to be replicated and carried forward on a much wider and intense scale," commented one resource speaker. e-Learning courses, like other APO projects, require joint efforts. But in this project modality, a critical element is necessary: technical support to connect all parties involved online. This month's People-behind-the-scenes subject is not an individual but the team at the Tokyo Development Learning Center (TDLC) which assists the APO in conducting its videoconferencing-based e-learning courses utilizing the Global Distance Learning Network of the World Bank.

An important first step in conducting a videoconference course is arranging a suitable venue in each participating country. This may sound simple, although procuring a facility that meets technical requirements, can accommodate numerous people, and is easily accessible is complicated. The availability of advanced infrastructure in some countries is limited, meaning that personnel with technical knowledge and communication and coordination skills must be on hand to ensure stable connectivity and clear audio and video streams. "The TDLC team is incredibly professional and proactive when complying with requests and instructions, troubleshooting, and problem solving," commented one APO program officer.

However, no matter how high the level of professionalism, it cannot compete with a vocation. The TDLC staff are special because of the extra efforts they make, support when dealing with unexpected problems, and the pleasure of their company until the end of a session no matter how late. "Our team members have a keen sense of client orientation, achieving results, and working together," said TDLC Program Coordinator Eiko Wataya.

"All of us are very happy that participants learn from the courses and apply that new knowledge in their own countries. In that sense, the APO's e-learning courses always give us a high level of job satisfaction," said Wataya. When questioned on the success factors in APO e-learning courses, she listed good design; energetic, professional officers; and committed participants and resource speakers. The *APO News* would add one more element to that list: the contribution of the professional staff of the TDLC who are always happy to go the extra mile.

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