

Supporting the creation of successful SMEs


In the third week of March 2009, a group of Japanese productivity experts visited Sri Lanka to provide technical support and guidance to the National Productivity Secretariat (NPS), the NPO of Sri Lanka, and five Sri Lankan model companies as part of the APO Member Country Support Program (MCSP). The MCSP experts also conducted a midterm evaluation following the completion of the first phase of the 2008–2009 MCSP that started in July 2008. The two-year MCSP project implemented by the APO and the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) strengthens the productivity movement through capacity building of individual NPOs.

In his evaluation, the leader of the delegation, MCSP consultant Koji Yo, praised the enthusiasm and professional attitude of the NPS and model companies. Mr. Yo singled out Convenience Foods (Lanka) PLC (CFL), a manufacturer of soy-textured vegetable protein and other food products with 185 employees, for particular praise. “The level of quality control demonstrated by CFL is such that it obtained ISO9001:2000 certification without assistance from external consultants. This is an exceptional case since the vast majority of companies obtain ISO certification only with the assistance of ISO consulting firms.”

CFL’s productivity improvement efforts officially began in 2006 with its selection by the Ministry of Industrial Development as one of 10 SMEs to embark on a productivity and quality improvement program conducted by the National Institute of Business Management. CFL subsequently won both the Western Province and National Medium Manufacturer NPS Productivity Awards in 2006 and 2007. When the MCSP project started in 2008, CFL rose to the challenge by quickly implementing the various productivity tools on offer.

In the first three months, CFL managers and NPS consultants met eight times to establish the areas to be improved and formulate an action plan. According to CFL CEO Thilanka de Zoysa, “A primary MCSP project objective was to institute

quality control circle (QCC) activities.” With the help of MCSP and NPS consultants, five QCCs were established promoting *seiketsu* (improvements) in packing machine processes, the utilization of the production floor for curry sachet products, cleaning methods for all production lines, inventory processes, and space utilization efficiency on the office floor. CFL also began basic total productive maintenance activities and enhanced its 5S practices.

de Zoysa went on to say that, “We have seen positive improvements in our employees’ mindset, which have triggered other positive changes in the company such as more suggestions and kaizen ideas coming from the production floor. Employee motivation is now very high thanks to the QCCs.” He thanked the NPS for continual assistance and for selecting CFL for the MCSP project. He also thanked the experts, consultants, and CFL employees. 



NPS consultant (standing) explaining 5S to CFL employees