A·P·O news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

IT Initiatives in the APO Secretariat

*I*nformation technology (IT) and its very rapid development over the last few years are dramatically transforming the way we work and do business. It is now a powerful and indispensable tool for these purposes. In the APO Secretariat, efforts are being made to harness IT to renovate and improve its operating system. The latest IT initiative came from APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima who was anxious for the Secretariat to serve member countries well continuously. In the first half of 2001, he set up an IT Committee in the Secretariat under the leadership of Mr. Mukesh Bhattarai, who was transferred from the Industry Department where he served as program officer to the Information and Public Relations Department as the newly created IT program officer to take charge of the IT function in the Secretariat.

Mr. Bhattarai and his committee are assigned the following tasks: 1) to enhance the APO Web site on the Internet with the objective of building it into an authoritative portal on productivity; 2) to implement an Intranet system within the Secretariat to improve work operations and to introduce knowledge management; and 3) to establish an Extranet system to foster closer relationships with the NPOs of member countries for the more effective and efficient implementation of APO programs.

APO Web Site

The APO Web site was launched in January 1997. Its initial objective was to introduce the mission, work, activities, and news of latest developments of the organization and of the NPOs to the public. The scope of information provided was gradually expanded to include important statements of the Secretary-General and archived issues of the *APO News* in both the English and Japanese editions. In September last year, the Web site was redesigned and its contents greatly expanded and improved.

The APO Web site caters to four groups of users. The first group is the general public who visit the site for information about the APO. The next group comprises productivity practitioners, managers, academicians, and others who are seeking information related to the productivity concept. In the third group are APO participants and resource persons who use the Web site to access information and documents on the APO projects they are involved in, like project notifications, program schedules, bio-data forms, and guidelines for participation. The final group are those who want to be updated on APO activities or to read the *APO News* online. The monthly average number of visitors to the Web site has been increasing. On an annualized basis, the figure topped 100,000 for the first time in May this year. This is a clear indication that visitors are finding the APO Web site useful.

APO Intranet

The APO Intranet became operational in late 2001. The system, based on a local area network (LAN), is enabling Secretariat staff members to share information quickly and effectively. The Secretariat now has its own mail server, which adds an important dimension to the Intranet system. A dedicated lease line was set up to allow staff members to connect to the Internet on a continuous basis. Prior to this, staff members wishing to connect to the Internet for accessing/sending e-mail or visiting Web sites had to use either a dial-up modem or go through ISDN. Both were time-consuming and costly. With the LAN, staff members can connect to the Internet instantaneously. It is also reduces the cost by almost 50 percent. With this cost savings, the investment in the LAN will be recovered within two years, not to mention other advantages gained, like improved efficiency, time saved, and greater convenience for staff.

> "Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it. "
> *Lou Holtz*

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The Intranet has also enabled the establishment of a knowledge center (KCenter) in the Secretariat as a one-stop window for APO staff members to access all APO-related information. The APO KCenter has three basic components: 1) an information hub on past APO projects and participant database; 2) information on member countries and their NPOs; and 3) information on APO administrative guidelines and activities. At the moment, the KCenter is available on the Intranet platform only. In the near future, it should be accessible through the Internet.

The APOnet

In May this year, the APOnet was set up as an exclusive Web site based on the Extranet platform. It is still undergoing tests to ensure its smooth functioning. The Secretariat hopes that it will be operational in June. As explained by APO Secretary-General Tajima, the APOnet is "to foster closer communications among the APO Secretariat, the NPOs, and the participants in ongoing APO projects for better program planning, preparation, and implementation, as well as to facilitate the establishment of networks for information exchange, productivity promotional drives, work collaboration, and benchmarking." The APOnet will enable the NPOs to have access to all APO project sites through which they can view or download resource papers, participants' reports, and the reports of the proceedings. Similarly, APO resource persons and participants can use the site to view or download resource/country papers and other documents relating to the program they are attending, upload their own papers for access by others, and download the course materials after the program.

More online tools will be added in the near future to deliver APO services. Online registration for inclusion in the APO roster of technical experts and online processing of applications for technical expert services are two ideas the Secretariat is working on now. The message is clear that the APO is committed to optimizing the use of IT for furthering the cause of the productivity movement in Asia and the Pacific.