Pilot knowledge management projects in Thailand

The Thailand Productivity Institute (FTPI), in support of the APO's initiative on knowledge management (KM) and to realize its vision of being the leading organization in driving productivity and quality improvement and organizational excellence in the country, launched a program to build its KM capability in 2003. A pilot project to implement KM within the FTPI was undertaken in February of that year. Three other organizations from both the public and private sectors were invited to join in the pilot scheme: Siriraj Hospital, the largest public hospital in Thailand; Spansion (Thailand) Limited; and TRUE Corporation Limited.

The pilot project was designed to: 1) formulate a practical methodology for implementing KM that is suitable for local organizations; 2) develop the pilot organizations into role models for others to emulate; 3) increase awareness of KM as a management tool for enhancing competitiveness among local organizations; and 4) build the FTPI's capability to provide consultancy and training services on KM.

The project was managed by the FTPI, with technical assistance provided by APO-deputed expert Robert J. Osterhoff, a former Vice President and Director, Corporate Quality and Knowledge Sharing, Xerox Corporation (worldwide). A six-step change management methodology was used: 1) transition and behavior management; 2) communication; 3) process and tools; 4) learning; 5) measurement; and 6) reward and recognition. The pilot projects were not meant to accomplish an organizationwide implementation of KM. Initial focus was on the following select areas: customer knowledge, technical knowledge, knowledge used by call center staff, and knowledge gained from continuous quality improvement activities. All the pilot organizations took one year and a half to complete their projects. They shared the lessons and experience gained in a public seminar on "Knowledge Management: From Theory to Practice" organized by the FTPI, August 2004, which was attended by more than 300 people, and in a book *Knowledge Management: From Theory to Implementation* published by the FTPI.

Among the key lessons learned from the pilot projects in implementing KM were: 1) a clear expectation of the desired results and creation of a supportive organizational culture are critical for successful KM implementation; 2) strong commitment and visible support from top management are imperative; 3) communication should be continuous to ensure that everyone understands and supports the implementing process; and 4) measurement should be performed constantly to gain feedback for further improvement.

The importance of a supportive organizational culture in the successful implementation of KM prompted the FTPI to launch a research study on cultural barriers to understand and identify the motivating factors for knowledge sharing in the four pilot organizations. They are also scheduled to meet later this year to exchange views on expanding and sustaining their KM programs and to develop a self-assessment tool for others to evaluate their KM status and identify new opportunities for improvement. ◎