

Knowledge management benchmarking

The APO organized the first study mission to Japan on Knowledge Management Benchmarking, 17–21 April, with 21 participants from 14 member countries. This study mission was the result of the APO's first collaboration with the Knowledge Dynamics Initiative (KDI) of Fuji Xerox. Thanks to KDI's support, the participants were able to visit three world-class Japanese companies that have been implementing knowledge management: Eisai (a pharmaceutical company), Fukoku Life Insurance Co., and Nissan Motors. In addition, Prof. Ikujiro Nonaka of Hitotsubashi University, a world-renowned authority on knowledge management, gave a special presentation on "Knowledge-based Management" to the participants.

The main objective of the study mission was to enable the participants to benchmark their knowledge management activities against those of the four Japanese companies. At the outset of the study mission, KDI Consultant Naoki Ogiwara explained the code of conduct for benchmarking and the participants engaged in a group discussion to fix their perspective on benchmarking. Then Prof. Nonaka set out the theoretical framework of knowledge management, elaborating on tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, and the socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization model. He also described phronetic leadership in the context of knowledge management, referring to the examples of Honda Motors and Seven-Eleven Japan.

At Eisai, the participants were briefed on the company's "Knowledge Creation for Realizing Human Health Care Concept." The knowledge management focus of Fukoku Life Insurance is "Change Initiatives for Customer-centric Organization: Knowledge-based Revolution." The manager of the Sony Semiconductor Business Unit made a presentation at the workshop on



Participants in a problem identification exercise

"Knowledge Management in Semiconductor Designing." Finally, at Nissan Motors, the participants learned about the company's "Changing Global Marketing and Sales through Knowledge Management." All four presentations were followed by question-and-answer sessions.

After the company visits, intensive group discussion sessions, moderated by Ogiwara, were conducted on what participants had learned from the four different knowledge management models, key findings of the study mission, and how their newly acquired knowledge could be adapted to the home setting. 