

Focusing on SME strategies

At the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the 2008 global financial crisis was noted for having created a “perfect storm” affecting the entire world. SMEs from APO member countries were not spared the resulting credit crunch and collapsing markets. Eighteen CEOs, senior managers, and government officials from 10 APO member countries converged in Taipei, Republic of China (ROC), 23–26 November 2010, for the study meeting on Business Development Strategies for SMEs after the Global Financial Crisis. Hosted by the China Productivity Center (CPC), the discussions were led by four APO-assigned experts.

Presentations by the experts elicited thought-provoking discussions from the group. Some CEOs noted that their companies had dodged the financial crisis by relying on internal resources, while others had depended on long-standing relationships with banks. For others, switching to lower-margin products and services allowed the retention of factories and workers while preparing for an upturn. Governments also played a critical role by guaranteeing the loans of affected businesses that were fundamentally sound, e.g., the Korea Credit Guarantee Fund.



Hoontrakul admiring an exquisite porcelain vase during the visit to the Franz Collection. Photo S. Loo/APO

and core values” and for “networking and collaboration.” Capping the meeting was a site visit to the Franz Collection, an SME that successfully transitioned from a contract manufacturer into a vertically integrated, world-renowned premium porcelainware brand by building up its design capabilities. A working paper summarizing the learning points of this study meeting will be published on the APO website.

Another effort to sustain APO support for SME development in the Asia-Pacific region was the recently completed training course on Knowledge Management (KM)

for SMEs, also held in Taipei, ROC, 7–10 December 2010. The training course was designed to assist SMEs in enhancing their productivity through applications of the KM methodology, framework, and tools. Implemented by the CPC, the course was attended by 17 international participants, of which the majority came from SMEs.

The KM training course was a follow-up activity to the APO publication *Practical KM Guide for SME Owners and Managers*, released in September 2010. That volume contains eight case studies describing the key steps various SMEs utilized to adapt KM tools and techniques to introduce innovations, improve quality, motivate staff, and enhance revenues. The three KM experts who wrote the *Practical KM Guide for SME Owners and Managers*, Naoki Ogiwara of the Fuji Xerox Knowledge Dynamics Initiative, Ron Young of Young International, and Dr. Boondée Bunyagidj of the Thailand Productivity Institute, also served as resource persons for the training course.

The training course included two informative site visits: one hosted by Advanced TEK International Corporation, a consulting firm; and the other by Arbor Technology, a PC manufacturer. The site visits were moderated by local expert Prof. Chia-Shen Chen of National Taiwan University, who had introduced two ROC firms in another APO KM publication,

KM: Case Studies for Small and Medium Enterprises. Examining KM applications in both the service and manufacturing sectors was beneficial. The four-day training course allowed participants to understand how KM could make positive changes in the daily operations of their own enterprises, although many wished that the duration could have been longer and more examples offered for consideration. ☺



This Guide is available in PDF at http://www.apo-tokyo.org/00e-books/IS-44_Practical-KM-Guide-for-SME-OwnerManager.htm



Participants observing the operations of Advanced TEK International Corporation, a KM model. Photo M. Amau/APO