



APO *news*

Productivity, one click away

Information technology (IT) is not only a very powerful productivity tool, but also a gateway to conducting business in innovative ways that allow you to stay one step ahead of the competition. e-Learning is one such innovation. Recognizing its importance, the APO embarked on series of e-learning activities designed to bring this cutting-edge innovation to broader audiences in its member countries. There are two platforms that are used in APO e-learning programs: the APO's own e-Learning Portal and the e-learning facilities of other organizations.



Dispatching productivity information from Tokyo to Sri Lanka via e-learning videoconferencing

Anytime, anywhere: APO e-Learning Portal

"I was overwhelmed by participants' positive response," said Program Officer K.D. Bhardwaj, Industry Department, APO Secretariat, speaking about his training course on Energy Efficiency (EE) implemented through the APO e-Learning Portal early this year. "More than 75% of program participants took part in the online live session, and at the end of each session many relevant and technical questions were received."

In 2006, the APO's three Web-based projects remained popular with participants. Wherever they were, they found it easy to log onto the APO Web site with their assigned usernames, observe the expert presentations with PowerPoint slide illustrations, work through the material provided, and then interact online with APO officers and resource speakers. Because everything is online the cost per participant is very low. "Time management is crucial for successful participation in the online program," said Monitoring Officer Shusil Sharma, Alternate Energy Program Center, Nepal, an EE training course participant. "I had to manage the working hours at the office so as not to miss live sessions because it was mandatory to be present at the course at the specified time." Project Coordinator Trinh Thi Phuong Thao, Vietnam Productivity Centre, another participant, also stressed the importance of passion and dedication to learning as key elements.

Expert guidance in Internet access, hardware, and software are necessities, pointed out as Director, Research and Planning Department and former Senior IT Officer Mukesh Bhattarai, APO Secretariat, who explained, "The rehearsal sessions are carried out to help the resource speakers and participants become familiar with the system and procedure for

(Continued on page 5)

Volume 37 Number 9
September 2007

"The goal of education is to replace an empty mind with an open mind."

Malcolm Forbes

I N S I D E

- 2..... p-Watch—USA
- 3..... p-TIPS
- 4..... New APO publication
- 4..... Common Sense Talk
- 5..... New officers at APO Secretariat
- 6..... Aging Asia and its challenges for the productivity movement
- 6..... Safety management in food industry SMEs
- 7..... p-Experts
- 7..... APO-NPO Update
- 7..... Program calendar
- 8..... APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka speaks
- 8..... 48th WSM to convene in Hanoi

Published monthly by
Asian Productivity Organization
Hirakawa-cho Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 2F
1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102-0093, Japan
Tel: (81-3) 5226-3920
Fax: (81-3) 5226-3950
e-Mail: apo@apo-tokyo.org
Web site: www.apo-tokyo.org



Printed on Recycled Paper

accessing online sessions.” However, unforeseen technical problems with servers, video or audio feed, or presentation slides, although rare, have resulted in postponed or cancelled sessions. The projects were popular despite occasional difficulties according to Bhardwaj, who noted, “Participants’ feedback showed that all of them were happy to participate in this type of training course despite facing those problems. However, we should make all efforts to minimize technical difficulties as well as improve the contents of the courses.”

Everybody present onscreen: e-Learning facilities

Entering the Tokyo Development Learning Center (TDLC) of the World Bank is like entering a TV news studio. A large screen, divided into four sections, sits in front of the speakers’ seats. The screen shows each national venue, with another larger screen showing the venue at which a resource speaker, local project coordinator, or a participant is reaching for a hand-held microphone.

Projects have been implemented using the e-learning facilities of the TDLC, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Association for Overseas Technical Scholarships, and other organizations. In 2006, the three APO projects reached 320 participants in 12 countries. The APO will offer three e-learning projects this year on Green Productivity (GP) and Integrated Management Systems (IMS), the Toyota Production System (TPS), and ISO22000, all in three phases. While each phase has the same content, the participating groups composed of 20 or more individuals differ. Bhattarai emphasized the importance of the content in e-learning courses, “In an e-learning program participants cannot enjoy the benefits of a face-to-face program, such as

firsthand experience or direct interaction with resource speakers and other participants. Content should be attractive enough to compensate.” Time allocation in delivering those contents is also crucial, as TDLC Program Coordinator Eiko Wataya explained, “Our staff and the APO officer in charge review the contents and discuss how best to convert that into the e-conference format to hold participants’ attention. Speakers’ presentation times, Q&A sessions, and short breaks are carefully allocated.”

The advantages of the e-conference format according to APO Liaison Officer for Malaysia Md. Zainuri Juri, who coordinated the GP-IMS course (Phase I), are, “A greater number of participants at lower cost is one big advantage of the e-learning format. There is less traveling time for participants, who can go back to work or home from the learning centers.” However, several hurdles must be overcome before these projects can be expanded. “Major challenges were marketing and getting participants for the program, especially when the timing was quite unfavorable, at 23:00, for this project,” reported Consultant Nilesh Roneel Kumar, the Fiji coordinator for the GP-IMS course (Phase I).

Some of the advantages of the e-learning program can also be shortcomings. Shigeru Yoshida, the resource speaker for the ISO22000 course (Phase I) noted that he “had to generalize the topics to be presented due to the variety of participants. It was also very difficult to go to into specifics without knowing participants’ background and interests,” adding that indirect contact with the participants made it difficult to respond immediately or adjust presentations to their needs.