



APO NEWS

Volume 39 Number 12
December 2009


p. 5, Workshop, ROC



p. 5, Conference, Singapore



p. 6, Forum, Philippines

Driving business excellence in the APO through a center of excellence

Early this year, the APO launched a pilot Center of Excellence (COE) project, designating SPRING Singapore as the first COE in the area of business excellence (BE). The COE initiative was conceived in 2008 at the annual APO Governing Body Meeting and Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs. The APO COE concept and approach were then discussed at a consultative meeting held at the Secretariat, 12–13 February 2009. Based on that discussion and suggestions made, SPRING Singapore was designated as the pilot COE and an action plan for undertaking the pilot COE project in 2009 and 2010 was jointly established with SPRING Singapore. The plan focuses on regional BE promotion, strengthening BE capabilities of APO member countries, and sustaining SPRING Singapore's leadership in BE.

As part of its commitment to this new initiative, the APO deputed three international experts to the recent Business Excellence Global Conference held in Singapore, 3–4 November. The conference was jointly organized by the Singapore Quality Award (SQA) Governing Council and SPRING Singapore to celebrate 15 years of BE in Singapore. The APO, in parallel with the conference, also conducted a workshop for Senior Business Excellence Assessors, 3–6 November, to enhance the competencies of senior assessors by giving them an opportunity to absorb BE best practices from Singapore and other countries.

"SPRING Singapore has established itself as a leader in BE in Asia and the Pacific," stated APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka in his remarks at the opening ceremony of the conference. After noting the current positive and negative trends in adoption of the BE framework worldwide, Secretary-General Takenaka added, "Taking into consideration all of the above and in an attempt to revitalize the BE framework in the entire region, in 2009 the APO started a project on COE and designated Singapore as the first COE in the area of BE."



Secretary-General Takenaka speaking on the COE initiative

The 500 audience members at the conference heard presentations giving global perspectives on BE best practices. Starting with the keynote speech by renowned business improvement expert Dr. H. James Harrington, distinguished leaders from premier BE initiatives and award winners from around the globe shared their insights on how organizations can grow in challenging environments.



Panel discussion on business excellence

In addition to the conference, the SQA Governing Council and SPRING Singapore held a Business Excellence Gala Dinner where the winners of the SQA and three niche awards for people, innovation, and service excellence received their prizes. Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean presented the awards to the winners and remarked, "I am pleased to note that SPRING Singapore has been

CONTENTS

- 2....p-Leader
- 3....Comment board
- 4....Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques
- 5....Strategies for sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs
- 6....Sweden's competitiveness in quality and innovation
- 6....Knowledge management forum: Be a winner
- 7....Program calendar
- 7....Online registration for Eco-products Directory 2010
- 7....New APO publication
- 7....Photo report
- 7....APO/NPO update
- 8....APO News quiz





Deputy Prime Minister Hean extolling the APO COE

designated by the APO, an intergovernmental body, as its COE in BE.”

The APO workshop served to bring together senior assessors, award administrators, and consultants of award systems to discuss the core competencies of assessors and how such skills could be acquired. The workshop concluded that two sets of skills, technical ones relating to the

assessment of organizations under the BE framework, and soft ones relating more to people, are needed for all assessors, including senior assessors. Most core competencies that participants suggested were soft skill-related, such as organization, team building and communication, inspirational leadership and facilitation, and empowerment and delegation.

Since the launch of the COE project, the APO has conducted various activities under the established action plan. To help SPRING Singapore sustain its leadership in BE, the APO deputed two experts in July. One expert was from the US Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and the other from Europe’s Quality Management Excellence Award. They participated in the 2009 SQA assessments to ensure that the rigor of the BE assessment process was aligned with international standards and conducted workshops on best practices for assessors.

To develop member countries’ BE capacity, the APO deputed Business and Service Excellence Director Darshan Singh, SPRING Singapore, to Bangladesh and the Philippines, 2–7 August 2009. “The objective of my trip was to understand the needs of these two countries for assistance and to help develop specific action plans that would address those needs over the next one to two years,” said Singh. The objective was met with the development of action plans for each country. From the Singapore side, the development of a database of suitable BE experts from both in and outside the Asian region is underway and it is planned that it will be ready for use in 2010. “This database will be used to help identify suitable experts who can assist APO member countries with their BE or quality award initiatives,” Singh explained. The APO hopes that, by the end of 2010, more countries will be benefiting from COE projects and tangible results will be seen. 