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First Web-based APO e-learning program

In yet another venture into harnessing the information and communications technologies for training and development, the APO launched its pioneer Web-based e-learning training course on "Transition to ISO 9001:2000 QMS: A Paradigm Shift," 8–26 September 2003. Its objective was to enable participants to understand the key requirements for implementing the ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System in the transitional phase and the ways to develop and strengthen quality management practices in their organizations. Twenty-seven participants from 12 APO member countries took part in the program.

The key advantage of e-learning is that it can be carried out by anyone, anywhere, at any time so long as the person has access to a computer that is linked to the Internet. The multiplier effect that this methodology generates is tremendous. It makes training cost-effective and productive. This probably prompted John Chambers, CEO of Cisco, the foremost information technology provider today, to comment: "The biggest growth in the Internet, and the area that will prove to be one of the biggest agents of change, will be online training, or e-learning." As described by the American Society for Quality, e-learning is Web-based courses taken over the Internet. Some courses are designed to be completed with the guidance of an instructor, while others can be completed on your own time, at your own pace, and from anywhere you have Internet access.

The methodology followed in the first APO e-learning program was as follows: The expert facilitating the program uploaded the first set of reading materials onto a dedicated site on the APOnet, the APO extranet system, on the first day of the training course. Participants were each issued a username identification and password to enable them to enter the site to access the materials. They were given three days to study the materials and to submit questions, comments, and suggestions on the discussion board. At the end of the session, participants were asked to complete an assignment. With this, the first module was completed. On the fourth day, the second set of materials was uploaded and participants again had three days to study them, seek clarifications, and undertake an assignment. This same pattern was repeated for the third, fourth, and fifth modules. On the last day of the project, a formal test was conducted. The test was sent to participants at a prior agreed time convenient to each and they were given three hours to complete it. Participants were graded on the results of their assignments (40%) and their performance on the final test (60%). The top 10 participants will be invited to attend the APO "ISO 9001:2000 Series Auditors/Lead Auditors Course" to be held in Malaysia in March 2004.

The expert who designed and conducted the program was Sanjeev Kumar, systems manager in MECON Limited, India. He commented that course members participated actively and enthusiastically in the program. "The fact that they undertook this training in addition to their normal office work speaks volumes for their keen interest in the subject and their commitment to its study." When asked for her comments on the program, Antoinette Virtucio, a participant from the Development Academy of the Philippines, said: "I found Web-based e-learning convenient and efficient as it provided flexibility in the schedule to read course materials, do exercises, and participate in the discussions. It also allowed me to take responsibility for my own learning. After attending the APO program, I was able to achieve my purpose of acquiring knowledge on ISO9001:2001 QMS to make better contributions in my organization's preparation for certification." 

"Production is not the application of tools to materials, but logic to work."

Peter F. Drucker

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