



APO *news*

Knowledge technologists: their expanding role

Knowledge workers are considered as necessary conditions and principal success factors for joining the knowledge economy. Within this knowledge workforce, the numbers of those referred to as "knowledge technologists" are anticipated to increase the most rapidly. Knowledge technologists are highly trained professionals who may spend more time working with their hands than with their brains. Their manual work, however, is based on a substantial amount of theoretical knowledge that can be acquired only through formal education, not through mere apprenticeships. Examples of knowledge technologists include software designers, analysts in clinical laboratories, manufacturing technologists, and paralegals.



Participants visiting Photonics Technology Institute

Knowledge management has been an APO thrust area since 2002, and numerous projects have examined the topic. The most recent was a symposium to examine the characteristics and socioeconomic implications of knowledge technologists in member countries, and how to develop them, in Gwangju, Republic of Korea, 24–27 May 2005. Seventeen participants from 15 member countries attended. The symposium discussions confirmed that knowledge technologists are empowered by formal knowledge. Specifically, it was acknowledged that the application of formal knowledge enables knowledge technologists to do their jobs better and allows them to do "the right thing at the right time." Many countries cite such indicators as the number of researchers, size of R&D budget, number of patents acquired, and number of scientific journal publications as the basis for estimating their population of knowledge technologists. Mastery of science and technology, however, is not the ultimate parameter; nor is it the sole determining qualification for knowledge technologists. Those graduating from liberal arts faculties, for example, have equal qualifications and opportunities to become knowledge technologists.

(Continued on page 5)

Volume 35 Number 8
August 2005

"The entrepreneur is essentially a visualizer and an actualizer... He can visualize something, and when he visualizes it he sees exactly how to make it happen."

Robert L. Schwartz

INSIDE

- 2.... p-Watch—Australia
- 3.... p-TIPS
- 4.... APO publication
- 4.... Common Sense Talk
- 5.... 5S and kaizen for the government sector
- 6.... NIPO celebrates 12th anniversary
- 6.... South African NPI representatives visit APO Secretariat
- 7.... p-Experts
- 7.... APO/NPO Update
- 7.... Program calendar
- 8.... Eco-products International Fair 2005

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

As exemplified by the case of India, knowledge technologists appear in such forms as animation graphic artists or the range of linguists who are actively involved in back-office operations. Such back-office operations are quickly proliferating in various Asian countries due to the increase in the number of business process outsourcing arrangements by foreign-based corporations from around the world. It is widely recognized that knowledge technologists are strategic assets for corporations. Given the competitive edge that knowledge gives to an organization, knowledge technologists are assuming a central and strategic role. Therefore, the challenge for corporations and organizations is to integrate, unlock, and align the tremendous information and capabilities of knowledge technologists within the organization.

Integrating means allowing knowledge technologists to be both involved in and committed to the organization. This requires the organization to appreciate and value their standing as knowledgeable professionals by offering

them appropriate incentive systems and schemes. Alignment means channeling their knowledge and capabilities to meet the objectives and goals of the organization. Finally, unlocking means drawing out the store of knowledge and ideas within the pool of knowledge technologists and sharing them for organizational advantage.

The symposium participants suggested that these processes of integrating, unlocking, and aligning knowledge technologists would be particularly powerful and effective when pursued within and in tandem with a business excellence framework, such as national quality award frameworks that are already in place in many APO member countries.

The symposium participants visited the Phototonics Technology Institute, an R&D facility open to both the government and private sector. Its open facilities encourage the development of knowledge technologists divided into various high-tech functions.