



APO *news*

Green Productivity Practicum Workshop

A new e-learning dimension

The APO has been promoting the Green Productivity (GP) concept in Asia and the Pacific for the past several years with the message that both economic development and environmental protection are key strategies for sustainable development. The APO has been successful in introducing GP as a practical way to achieve sustainable development. However, in this endeavor, the need to develop the necessary human resources to introduce GP tools and techniques effectively was identified as a crucial step.

For this purpose, the APO has developed a number of GP training of trainers programs, which include a one-day forum for the CEO and executive management level to introduce GP awareness to upper-level management in organizations; a two-day workshop for the upper- and middle-management levels to introduce the importance of GP and how to implement it; and a five-day workshop for middle managers and technical personnel to teach them how to implement GP in their organizations through case study exercises. In addition to these activities focusing on various levels of organizations, the APO held the first pilot five-week practicum-oriented workshop on GP in Vietnam in 2000, and the second five-week workshop was organized in Malaysia. The course duration was revised, and since 2001, the APO has held an annual four-week practicum workshop for those who want to implement GP in their enterprises as well as to develop lead GP experts/trainers who can engage in promoting GP at the national level. These trained GP experts can then become lead GP trainers within their country.



A group exercise in progress

One of the practical difficulties that surfaced after this series of multi-country practicum workshops was the participants' initial level of understanding of GP. Since the practicum workshop usually attracts participants from multidisciplinary backgrounds who represent countries with different levels of economic development, it is natural that workshop participants have varying levels of GP exposure. It was therefore felt that some type of mentoring of the participants prior to workshop attendance to ensure that they had at least some knowledge of GP concepts would help make the practicum workshop more effective.

Recent advances in information technology (IT), particularly Internet-based e-learning platforms, offer a cost-effective, simple solution to this practical problem. Thanks to the chief resource person of the workshop, Dr. Suporn Koottatep of

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"Success or failure in business is caused more by the mental attitude even than by mental capacities."

Walter Scott

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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



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Thailand, the APO was able to utilize an e-learning platform that was originally established for an EU project to organize an e-course on GP for Industry. That project was developed in a collaborative venture between the Aalborg University, Denmark, and Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Twenty-one participants who were slated to attend the one-month practicum workshop in Malaysia in March were invited to participate in a two-week e-learning pre-workshop course on GP from their respective home countries before leaving for Malaysia. They participated in the course online, spending approximately 10 hours logged on, 10 hours in study on their own, and four hours completing assignments in both weeks. Afterward, most indicated that the e-learning course was useful and that the exercise had made them better prepared to get the most from the face-to-

face workshop. The resource persons for the practicum workshop also reported that the pre-workshop course had made it easier to transfer GP knowledge to the participants compared with previous workshops. They also strongly recommended the permanent use of similar pre-workshop Internet-based exercises. However, a few difficulties are associated with this recommendation. The Internet and computer access of prospective participants, particularly of those from developing countries, may form a major bottleneck. The lack of computer skills is another problem. It is hoped that with increasing Internet access and the acquisition of computer skills in all member countries, this and other online platforms can play a vital role in future APO activities. The APO is planning to introduce similar warm-up courses before other future projects. 