

Lean systems for the service industry

Lean manufacturing systems involve the systematic elimination of all types of waste in production and related processes. They require identifying and eliminating activities that do not add value to the process of design, production, logistics, and customer relations and are especially helpful to SMEs.

A workshop on Lean Applications Focusing on the Service Industry was organized by the APO in conjunction with the Thailand Productivity Institute, 15–19 June, in Bangkok. Twenty-two participants representing 14 APO member countries attended. They were all eager to understand the concepts of and strategic planning for the adoption of lean tools and applications for service organizations, including related elements of Six Sigma.

Three international and one local resource persons led the sessions and discussions. Resource Speaker Prof. T.N. Goh emphasized that lean, along with waste elimination and other practical techniques, had been applied in the service sector with demonstrated success. Prof. Cherdchai Nopmaneejumrusler's presentation on Siriraj Hospital's lean journey contained specific details from the all-important healthcare sector. The Marketing & Distribution Business Group of CP Retailink Co., Ltd. hosted a site visit. The multifaceted CP

Group is involved in retail, international trade, agroindustry, and telecommunications, among others, and relies on lean systems for customer responsiveness.

While participants agreed that the workshop had been valuable, several suggested focusing on lean applications in specific service subsectors in future. Mongolian participant Uranchimeg Byamba commented that her main takeaway lesson was: "Lean is culture, improved by knowledge." Experts and participants unanimously hoped that the APO would organize additional service-sector projects on lean. 🌀



CP Retailink Co., Ltd. Vice President Dr. Naris Thamkuekool (standing R) explaining the importance of lean system innovation for organizational productivity improvement. Photo courtesy of Thailand Productivity Institute.