

## Promoting ICT to boost productivity in the service sector



*Jim Morgenson of LinkedIn explaining to APO participants the use of ICT automation to enhance the efficiency of the office environment.*

**T**he APO, in addition to projects hosted in its member countries, regularly organizes study missions on various topics to nonmember countries. Such projects help APO member countries to gain a more global perspective on best practices of productivity enhancement, by providing an opportunity to observe and learn applications and strategies initiated by other countries and agencies outside the APO region. As a recent example, the APO organized a study mission to the USA on the Use of ICT in Service-sector Firms for Productivity Improvement, 9–13 November 2015. The innovations and advances made in ICT in recent years have not only rewritten the multimedia and social media cultures but also contributed to productivity promotion and enhancement. Innovations in multimedia platforms, tools, and software hold great potential to help service-sector companies provide better-quality services and at the same time improve overall organizational performance.

Visiting various service-sector companies in Silicon Valley, the mission examined the best practices of such US companies in innovative uses of ICT for productivity growth and improvements in quality and cost. Over the five-day mission, led by the APO Secretariat and supported by local coordinators USJP Culture and Education and USAsia, the group visited Google, LinkedIn, Tableau, and Fetch Robotics where innovative ICT strategies and ideas on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services were explained. Other

best practices were demonstrated by Stanford University in the use of ICT at its business school for product designing, Levi's Stadium in the incorporation of ICT for service improvement, and Eatsa and Fang Restaurant on the use of ICT applications for creating the ultimate customer experience in food service.

The mission comprised 13 participants from nine APO member countries. They represented various service sub-sectors, including television, distribution, education, communication, and electricity, as well as government and public-sector agencies. All were enthusiastic about the value the mission would bring to their own organizations but with their diverse backgrounds, they appreciated different elements of the study mission. Epili Ravula of Fiji gained a new understanding of "the Internet of things." "The culture of IT firms in Silicon Valley" was appreciated by Yuki Tanabe of Japan. The "design thinking concept" as well as "venture capitalists who support new innovations" were cited as impressive by Sri Lankan participant E.L.K. Dissanayake. Learning "how to apply big data and open data in public service" would help Wiboon Phatrapiboon of Thailand in his work at the Electronic Government Agency. All participants looked forward to sharing their new insights in their home countries and workplaces to disseminate the knowledge and promote new initiatives. 🌐