

Penyampai : TAN SRI DATO SERI AHMAD SARJI BIN ABDUL HAMID
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TECHNICAL SKILL COMPETITION
Lokasi : CIAST SHAH ALAM
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I would like to thank Mr. Akita for having kindly invited me to officiate this morning's Opening Ceremony of the 4th Malaysia Matsushita Group Technical Skill Competition. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Matsushita Electric for organising this annual technical skill competition which is a contribution to the industrial development of the nation. I share with you the hope that this competition will achieve its objective of promoting education and work skills among Matsushita's employees. A quality organisation cannot be built overnight; it requires a substantial amount of investment of time, money and effort, in education and training.

Mr. Konosuke Matsushita was committed towards training and the belief that everyone can be an asset to the organisation. One of the secrets behind Japan's highly skilled labour force is the system of training. As soon as an employee joins the firm, he is put on an intensive orientation and training programme at factories and sales outlets to give him an overall perspective and hands-on experience of the organisation's operations. Such training and exposure are especially useful for the white-collar worker who might otherwise have no opportunity to be involved in the day-to-day production and sales operations.

Such programmes also serve to orientate the employees to the organisation's culture and enable them to share the organisation's common values and managerial philosophy.

Learning is built on strengths. By this, I mean that it is more effective for the manager to deliberately seek out the positive qualities in each person and help him build on those qualities. Such a manager acts on the assumption that most people are capable of learning to do the job they are assigned to, and doing it well. When an employee finds out that his manager has put his trust and confidence in him, he will try and live up to the latter's expectations.

This is also the philosophy behind job rotation which forms an important part of education and training. By exposing employees to many job experiences through job rotation and complemented with on-the-job and off-the-job training, organisations are in fact trying to identify employees' talents.

A manager ought to give seventy percent of his attention to the positive qualities of his subordinates and thirty percent is enough for areas that need improvement or change. Employees, on their part, should reciprocate by trying to see the good qualities in their managers.

Positive attitudes on both sides would go a long way in improving productivity of the organisation. I think it is very important to build learning into the corporate system.

Traditionally, most education programme are problem-focussed and concentrated on correcting employees' weaknesses. That is necessary up to a point to ensure basic skills are learnt. After that point, employees need to know their strengths in order to find out where to improve. Then they need to know what bad habits inhibit those strengths.

Technical skills alone are not sufficient to ensure competitiveness. We are living in a contemporary, technology-driven world where consumers have access to information about goods and services from around the world.

This is what we called the competitive era. To achieve a winning edge over competitors and stay ahead, every organisation has to know how best to satisfy customers.

There are two types of competition. The first type is known as the visible foreign competition. This is where countries have to compete against each other for greater market share of products and services.

For example, any country in the world today would have to compete against the high quality standards of Japanese, German or Korean products. Here it is fairly easy to see the competition we are up against, which is usually measured in terms of the features and characteristics of a product or service like the superior performance and reliability of a German car or the high-tech features and design of a Japanese electronic appliance.

The other type of competition known as the invisible competition refers to how Japanese, German and Korean managers and workers think, act, and decide. This can be described as the ownership of quality infrastructure which supports the production of quality products and services. This type of competition is difficult to measure and focus. It calls for a total approach to quality where knowledge, skills and attitudes learnt are transformed to desired behaviour for managing quality and making quality happen. Henceforth it is not sufficient to send your workers to training institutes and hope that they will return as excellent workers ready and able to help the organisation soar to greater heights.

A study carried out in America has recently shown, in the first quarter of 1992, nine out of ten consumer and industrial buyers in the major international markets made quality equal to or more important than price in their purchase decisions. This is a remarkable change from the mood of the early 80's where only three or four out of ten customers thought and bought products this way. This doubling of buyer emphasis on quality within such a short time is one of the biggest changes in modern economic and social history.

The two types of competition which I have just mentioned namely the visible and invisible competition are being addressed to by TQM or Total Quality Management both by the private sector and the civil service in Malaysia.

TQM does not only emphasise on the quality of final goods and services but on the processes, human aspect and in fact the total operations of an organisation. TQM is responsible for making top leadership play the role of strategic thinkers committed to carving a niche in the market. They have to think quality and to think globally. TQM also redirects attention from the mere development of workers' skills and knowledge to the readjustment of their way of thinking that customer satisfaction is their ultimate goal.

It calls for greater teamwork towards achieving that common single-minded objective of customer satisfaction.

Matsushita has in the past, in a number of forums, shared with us in the civil service experiences on the implementation of TQM. I hope this spirit of sharing information and also know-how will prevail and culminate in yet many other types of joint activities between the private sector to the civil service. On its note, I would like to wish all participants a successful competition and with that, I am glad to officially open the 4th Malaysia Matsushita Group Technical Skill Competition.