

Success Story (3): “My Technical Training in Sumitomo Wiring System Ltd., Japan”

by Mr. Yap Wai Luen / Malaysia

In 2005 Mr. Yap undertook AOTS Technical Training of the state-of-art technology and production management of wire harness and IE (Industrial Engineering) at Sumitomo Wiring System Ltd. (SWS) head office in Yokkaichi and at Hokuriku Harness Co., Ltd. for five months after having participated in the AOTS General Orientation. Upon his return to home company, an improvement team was formed with Mr. Yap as a leader but their project started in a way that was not so encouraging in the beginning. He decided to implement an IE introductory training to the team members as well as the relevant staff members, which evoked willingness among the members and improved communication and teamwork. The project was resumed when the training

was over, and it was conducted for approximately three months under regular guidance of the Japanese instructors. As the IE-based productivity enhancement spread in the company, significant improvements were achieved on the production line with doubled efficiency and subsequent ripple effects including reduction of labor and working hours and defective rate. Mr. Yap thinks that good communication in the work place, thinking before action and teamwork are all important elements for success. He says that AOTS training is effective for making him think and act like a Japanese as it is imperative to understand the Japanese way of production management to a full extent.

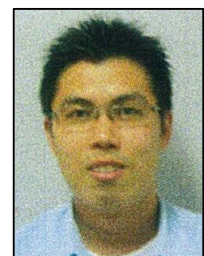
Mr. Yap Wai Luen

A resident of Johor Bahru, Mr. Yap received technical training in production control, IE and various techniques at Sumitomo Wiring Systems, Ltd. Since returning home he has been working as the manager of the assembly department of his company (J.K. WIRE HARNESS SDN. BHD.). He has successfully implemented company-wide IE-based productivity improvement techniques.

Past experience of AOTS training:

Management Training Course in 2005 [The Practical Improvement Program for Factories]

Technical Training in 2005 [provided at Sumitomo Wiring Systems, Ltd.]



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Story submitter: Mr. Yap Wai Luen
Country: Malaysia
Field of activities: Technology Transfer



25 October 2005, this is the first time in my life I stepped on Japanese territory. The feeling was indescribable: this is the first time I have gone overseas and it was to that terrific country, Japan. Most of the time when I saw TV programs, introducing Japan, I wished that I could go there immediately. However, my purpose of visit was not for sightseeing or traveling. My purpose was to learn from the Japanese their way of monitoring, controlling and communicating. I had seen many successful stories of Japanese / Japanese-based companies., now my vision was to study and implement the Japanese way in my company.

I recall the time before I was selected by my management for this training. I'm an engineer who works under a Japanese manager, Mr. Nishide. He always taught me and trained me in the Japanese way of working. But probably because of different culture, sometimes something that he taught seemed like it didn't make sense and it didn't have a great impact on me. But, I still followed his instructions and did as what he taught me to. When I followed the way of what he taught me, things seemed to going well and I could actually achieve a good result. Since I had many colleagues and other superiors who were not Japanese, most of the time I was influenced by their way of doing things and it would differ from what my manager had taught me.

One day, Nishide-san came to me and said, "I'll send you to Japan for 5-month training." I was so surprised and excited by this news. I couldn't believe that I would actually be selected among other candidates. He told me that he and my company's General Manager had actually fought hard in order to send me to Japan. I was really touched by what he said and then promised him that I'd do my best to learn from the Japanese and bring the "Japanese Way" back to my company.

Then, my journey to Japan started. At first, in AOTS Kansai Kenshu (training) Center, I started my General Orientation Course which included Japanese classes. It was one of the requirements in order for me to have better communication and understanding with Japanese people. With all the kind teachers there, I was able to learn Japanese in the most effective way. Even though Japanese was a bit hard to learn, but with the help of teachers and my fellow classmates from various countries,

everything seemed interesting. The activities like, “Home Visit,” “Japanese New Year Celebration,” “Study Tour” and “Walk Rally” were the most interesting and good experience for trainees to get close to the Japanese people on their own. Through these activities, we could actually communicate with different Japanese peoples, other than teachers/staff members in AOTS, as well as build up the team work and communication among the trainees. AOTS actually did a very good job with the Japanese language training through their effective training system and also not to forget about their well maintained facilities at the AOTS Kansai Training Center which provided a very good learning environment for trainees.

After completing the General Orientation Course, my journey continued with the greatest challenge: going to Sumitomo Wiring System Ltd. (SWS) for my 4-months specialized practical training. Training in SWS was actually separated into two locations: at headquarters of SWS in Yokkaichi City, Mie Prefecture, and Hokuriku Harness Co., Ltd., which is one of SWS group company, in Hokuriku District.

At SWS Yokkaichi, I learned the theory part of the industrial engineering method and its application the Wire Harness processes. This theoretical training took 2 weeks time in Yokkaichi. Unlike in the AOTS Kanshu Center, where meals are prepared, we needed to prepare our own meals by ourselves during the training in Yokkaichi. This was really a good experience for me since in Malaysia, food as normally prepared by my family. Independence is one of the things I enhanced during my stay in Japan.

After I completed my training at Yokkaichi City, Hokuriku District was the next destination. My time at Hokuriku can be considered the most challenging time of my life during my training in Japan. The Japanese language that’s use by the people there was a bit different from the basic Japanese I had learned in Osaka. At the beginning, I needed to pay extra attention when I communicated with the Japanese members there. As time went by, the situation improved although I still faced some communication issues since the Japanese language I learnt was limited. During my technical specialized practical training there, I started to apply the IE (Industrial Engineering) into my improvement project. With the help of the SWS members, I started to understand the application method of all the IE techniques on the Wire Harness processes.

The weather in Japan during my training period was also one of the unforgettable experiences for me. During that period, Japan had the coldest winter season for more than 10 years. Hokuriku was so cold and every week I could experience snow falls. This was an experience that I could never have in Malaysia. Even though it’s cold, but when I saw the snow fall, it’s so beautiful that it made me forgot the coldness. But due to this cold season, I fell sick twice in Japan. I caught flue twice during my training in Hokuriku; it’s a bitter but sweet memory. It’s bitter because I was sick and sweet because my Japanese coordinator treated me when I was sick. His kindness really warmed me up in this winter season and let me feel the kindness of the Japanese people.

After 5 months of training in Japan and my final presentation in Hokuriku Harness, my training ended. Now, the new assignment of mine was the implementation of production improvement activities in my company. Before the end of this training, I had already started to think of the activities that I should start in my company after returning. Once I reported to work, I immediately reported to my superior my plan and he actually agreed and supported my improvement activities plan. An Improvement Team (HAI-V) which would be led by me was formed.

Basically, this improvement project started in a way that was not so encouraging. After surveying several members in other departments, the reasons were:

- Each member is engaged in his own daily routine
- Purpose and expected result of this project is not fully understood
- Improvement member has a lack of knowledge of Industrial Engineering
- Lack of confidence among Improvement members

In order to restore the confidence and spirit of my team members, I decided to conduct a training course. Through this training, I actually taught them the important point of IE (Industrial Engineering) and also a supportive video was shown in order to let them have better understanding. A little practical training was being carried out for them to familiarize themselves with the actual situation during the activities. After the training, I could actually see the increase in spirit and understanding of my members. From this case, I learnt that communication actually plays a very important role in order to get all the members to work together.

With the communication and teamwork issues solved, my improvement projects actually commenced once again. The improvement projects were carried out as per the SWS way of IE method implementation onto the wire harness process. In this activity, I studied the current problem/issue at the production line and then through the data collected, an appropriate target was set for the particular production line.



Activity of the HAI-V team

not only ourselves on the impact of this improvement activity but also the members from other departments as well. These results actually helped us a lot when we promoted this activity in the other lines/ plants. From there, I was able to expand my HAI-V Improvement team which led to a great achievement as well in terms of the efficiency rate, defect rate, man power reduction and working hours reduction. As my improvement activities go on, I actually gained confidence from my superior and was promoted to Assembly Manager in 2006.

Through all the improvement projects I've done, I believe that the most important elements that lead to success can be described as follows:

- Communication (communicate thoroughly)
- Thinking (think deeply before acting)
- Self confidence
- Team work (work as team and think as a team)
- Process ECRS (Eliminate, Combine, Rearrange & Simplify)
- PDCA (Plan, Do, Check & Action)

In order to fully understand the Japanese way of production control, we need to think like a Japanese and act like a Japanese. To do so, I will say that, AOTS did a very good job in providing all the necessary training courses, training facilities, training syllabus, and not to forget their friendly teachers and course coordinators. If you have the chance to learn from Japan, I strongly recommend that you to take a seminar provided by AOTS. Being trained in a comfortable learning environment, you can absorb and digest the things you learned more effectively and completely.

You might face HIGHS & LOWS during your training, but in a world full of challenges, there will be "No pain, No gain."

Last but not least, my sincere thanks to AOTS for the hospitality during my training in AOTS Training Center. Thank you.

Regards,
Yap Wai Luen