

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617. TEL: 3378191 ext 352, 353, 354 / 3362207 / 3362271

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SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEE CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE (LABOUR),
AT THE QCC CERTIFICATES PRESENTATION CEREMONY
AT SIEMENS COMPONENTS PTE LTD ON 6 OCTOBER 1982 AT 10.00 AM

INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to be here this morning to present Quality Control Circle (QCC) certificates jointly issued by the National Productivity Board (NPB) and Siemens. NPB has been assisting companies to set up in-house training programmes, especially programmes related to QCC activities. Siemens was one of the pioneer companies that recognised the need to promote QC circles. Since the programme was launched two years ago, Siemens has already established 27 QC circles.

My Congratulations.

Your management has made the right decision in helping you to form QC circles. I was told that even your Managing Director was involved in the initial training programmes for QC facilitators. The support of management, especially senior management, is essential in ensuring the success of QC circles.

After all, workers are encouraged to speak out, and contribute ideas to improve their work performance. Management staff must be prepared to accept suggestions from their workers. They may even have to admit their mistakes if workers can come out with better proposals. Hence, for QC circles to function, both management staff and workers must be properly trained. NPB can provide this training.

The results at Siemens have been impressive. QC circle activities have improved interpersonal relationships and communications. Productivity since 1980 has increased by about 75 per cent. Defectives were reduced, thereby increasing the reliability of the products by more than ten times. These tangible benefits will convince skeptics that QC circles do pay off. It is

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the best way to ensure that the company remains viable economically, and continue to award workers their annual wage increases. The fruit of productivity must after all be shared fairly between employers, workers and consumers. This is the cardinal principle on which our whole productivity movement has been based.

NATIONAL QCC MOVEMENT

The response to our drive to promote QC circles has been most encouraging. In less than two years, QC circles have been formed in areas which were thought to be difficult or near impossible. The government has set up QC circles in the form of Work Improvement Teams (WITs) in many government ministries. QC circles have been established in the armed forces, hospitals, factories, hotels and shops. Currently, about 300 QC circles have been registered at the National Registration Centre set up by the NPB in February this year. The government and the military are believed to have established about 500 WITs.

QC circle activities have become a national movement. An indication of the interest in QCC activities is the overwhelming response to the first Singapore National QC Circle Convention. This convention will be one of the highlights organised for the Productivity Month in November. About 60 QC Circles are expected to participate in the convention. The response to this event has been most encouraging and tickets to witness the first two preliminary rounds have been sold out.

Despite these gains, I must caution managers against viewing short-term successes as indicative of long-term gains. Workers may find QC Circles interesting initially, especially when they are given the chance to express their feelings. The problem with most companies is how to sustain this interest. Management must see training and productivity improvement as serious issues over the long-term. They must take steps to ensure that these issues are dealt with on a regular and widespread basis. They should continue to find ways to involve their workers in these issues. Then only can they produce quality products at competitive prices for the world markets.

CONCLUSION

Many companies in Singapore are making preparations to launch productivity campaigns in November. May I congratulate the management and staff of Siemens for their success in promoting QC Circles as part of this productivity campaign. Workers in Siemens should be proud of the fact that their company was able to send three teams of QC Circles to compete in the first Singapore National QC Circle Convention.

We hope this convention will encourage more of your friends to form QC circles. Good human relationships lead to higher productivity. In view of the rapid advance in technology, much of the work that you are doing now may soon be replaced by robots. Many of you will have to be trained for more skill-intensive jobs. You must be prepared to accept new jobs, and additional training. QC circles enable you to work out with your colleagues, new ways to improve your work performance. QC circles lead to good human relationships. You are no longer ordered around by your supervisors. You learnt to accept new ideas and new jobs because your supervisor, or even your fellow workers can explain such ideas to you during your QCC discussions. Productivity increases.

In fact, the more we automate, the more robots we use, the more we must emphasize on the development of good human relationships. If this message has been clearly understood, your future in Siemens will be ensured. Singapore's economic progress will also be ensured.

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