

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR PHUA BAH LEE, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (DEFENCE), AT THE SINGAPORE PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (SPMA) DINNER HELD AT BALLROOM, DYNASTY HOTEL ON WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 7.30 PM

Introduction

It is my pleasure to address all of you here to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Singapore Production Management Association (SPMA).

Your Association's involvement in the Productivity Movement is creditable. Your concern with the importance of promoting productivity consciousness among the members has been complemented by action. I understand that your Association has organized talks and seminars on management and productivity related issues and also study visits to commercial and industrial organizations in Singapore and overseas. These activities are a testimony of your Association's desire to better its service to its members and also help them to achieve higher standards of performance and efficiency.

SPMA

The SPMA, with 200 members, is one of the larger associations in Singapore, representing the small and medium enterprises. Small and medium enterprises provide supporting services to the larger companies. They therefore play a very important role in our industrial development.

Productivity and Quality

The world is now going through a recession. There is therefore difficulty in selling our products. In such times, we must increase our productivity and maintain the quality of our products so that our products can compete in the international markets. Cost reduction, reducing wastage, increasing efforts to modernise processes and plant must be of primary concern now.

We also need a more productive workforce - a workforce with the will to improve performance through more training and the will to excel through hard work.

Attitude

It has often been said that productivity is an attitude of the mind. The non-committal attitude of some workers has often been identified as the most serious impediment to productivity improvement at the workplace. Management should not condone this. Rather they should instil in workers the right attitudes toward productivity. Management should also provide patient and persistent education to workers to ensure that they realise that their welfare is closely interwoven with the welfare of their respective companies. If the company prospers, so would its workers but workers would suffer if the company collapses. On the other hand, I have also been told that middle management are often lacking in skills to motivate workers. The middle management often blames top management. This only goes to show that everyone has a role to enhance productivity and quality in an organisation. Top management, middle management and workers - all have a part.

Managers Must Manage

In addition to increasing the productivity of workers, managers must also do the right things and make the right decisions. In short, local management must manage and

take the effort to improve themselves. Management productivity includes taking steps to improve quality, reduce costs and fulfil delivery promises. It also means motivating employees and be prepared to share with them the fruits of productivity.

Production Managers Chapter

It is important to realise that the government's role is to create widespread awareness and to prepare the ground for productivity improvement. Actual productivity measures can only be taken by people at the workplace. Effective leaders must therefore be identified in organizations if productivity programmes are to be successful.

I have been told by NPB that efforts have been made to get Production Managers to play a more active role in the Productivity Movement. But why Production Managers? - You may ask. By virtue of their training and experience at the shopfloor, Production Managers are ideally placed to identify problems at the plant level. As they are in constant contact with the "ground", they can provide better feedback on the shopfloor situation, on work systems, productivity systems and workplace problems. Production Managers are actually in touch with the hard bottom-line and survival aspects of productivity. They are therefore crucial in efforts to reduce waste, enhance quality and implement productivity improvement at the shopfloor.

NPB has in fact been holding regular dialogue sessions with Production Managers. These sessions normally focus around productivity at the shopfloor, labour-management relations and issues which are considered by managers as relevant to increase productivity at the shopfloor. As a result of these dialogue sessions, Production Managers Chapter has been formed to enable Production Managers to meet on a regular basis and exchange information

on topical issues which are productivity and production-related. Some of the activities proposed for the Chapter include giving talks to Production Managers, workers and the pre-workforce. The Chapter would also look into the production of video filmlets to promote productivity comprehension among the workers by relating productivity to actual problems at the shopfloor. Perhaps, the SPMA can link up with the Production Managers Chapter and collaborate on productivity programmes.

If productivity programmes are going to be anything more than a public relations window dressing attempt by the company to create awareness of the importance of productivity, management must staff the programme with effective leaders. There is therefore a need to understand and be able to recognize the characteristics of "productivity movers" and place them in critical positions in organizations.

During the past four years, we have managed to create productivity awareness among Singaporeans. However real productivity gains can only be achieved when this awareness is translated into action at the workplace.

The SPMA has a vital role to play in promoting productivity consciousness among its members. I want to take this opportunity to call for your continued support and contributions to the national effort to make Singapore a productive nation.

In conclusion may I wish your Association every success in its future endeavours.

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