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## Improved Customer Care for Better Service Delivery

Over the years, customer service has emerged as a critical success driver for many leading-edge companies. Among the different activities, customer service caters for the provision of helpful and courteous front-line service to help customers gain access to services which they are entitled to. Conscious of these challenges and to be in line with the Government strategy for public services reform whereby public services must increasingly respond to the needs and aspirations of their customers, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions has requested the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council to act as the resource institution for a series of workshops on customer care with the objective of identifying actions that would improve the delivery of services related to social benefits and national pensions.

Through group discussions, participants from the social security cadre were called upon to identify the problems that inhibit their government

department from delivering services to expectations. To reverse the situation, a series of actions were proposed. These actions include an improvement in the physical environment so as to enhance the minimum physical standards of the customer services centres; streamlining of processes to eliminate redtapism; development of a customer charter to build trust with customers; development of an action plan to implement service improvements in a team-based approach; the integration of values so as to deliver a quality 'service de proximité' to the public; and the continual upgrading of the skills of the personnel through focused training. ■

## ICT as a Productivity Tool

### ICT in Schools

Seventy Standard V and VI pupils of the Bon Accueil Government School as well as their parents were initiated to the use of information technology during the ICT Week which was held at the school at the end of last July. An overview of the Computer Proficiency Programme, a 24-session training programme to acquire and use basic ICT skills so as to become computer literate, was given to the assistance. Procedures for enrolling on the course which is carried out in the afternoons and on week-ends in the different state secondary schools were also presented. The aim of the Computer Proficiency Programme goes along the same lines of the government to transform Mauritius into a cyber island where each individual from the student, housewife, layman and executive will need to develop the IT culture to enhance the development of the Mauritian society.

The pupils and their parents were also encouraged to set up a computer club in their school. The objective of the computer club is to develop co-curricular activities parallel to the curriculum where pupils will have the opportunity to use the computer as a productive tool for their education. Nowadays a lot of interactive educational materials, games and learning methods that are more appealing to learning than the traditional teacher-pupil interface are available on CD-ROMs and the Internet. Being

in a position to access these resources through the computer club will constitute an advantage for the pupils to develop their creative and intellectual abilities.



Responsible parents listening to the resource persons

### ICT in the Community

CATs Pailles, a community-based civic action team, is setting up a computer club for Pailles, a semi residential and industrial region in the outskirts of Port Louis. Following the commitment expressed by seventy inhabitants of the region to join the club, the NPCC, which advocates ICT as a productivity tool, conducted a visioning exercise on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2005 where the outcome of the session was the following vision for the club 'An IT and Educational Club for the Citizens of Pailles'. Consensus was reached that the club should not only enable the inhabitants to have access to facilities to learn IT but should also enable the inhabitants to use IT as a support to pursue their education needs. The business plan for the computer club is in the pipeline while the civic action team, which is the facilitator, is negotiating with the local school to have access to its computers so as to kick start their project. ■

*“Customers are like a swarm of bees. Without the honey there is no attraction.”*

Ifeoma Mbuk

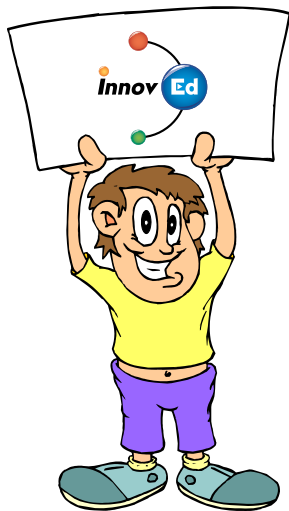
## Survey on Capacity Building Needs of NPOs in the SADC Region

SADC heads of state signed a declaration in 1999 committing themselves to facilitate the establishment of NPO in all member states by 2001 and to establish a mechanism for cooperation, sharing of experiences, know-how and information among NPOs in the region. It is important to promote productivity and competitiveness in the whole region if each country wants to benefit from a larger dynamic and competitive environment.

It is in this context that an initiative has been launched to develop a network of NPOs which will contribute to reinforcing capacity building among existing NPOs and also to sharing of the expertise of existing NPOs with countries which have not yet established such a structure.

A survey to identify capacity building needs of NPOs and expertise needed by non NPO countries is under preparation. NPCC is one of the NPOs contributing to the project funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat. A survey questionnaire has been prepared and will be administered in 12 countries of the SADC-EAC region. The survey will try to understand the productivity context of each country. On the basis of best practices of NPOs worldwide, it will attempt to identify the capacity building needs of each one of these countries. In addition, the survey will attempt to diagnose the obstacles to the promotion of productivity in these countries. A conference is planned in November where tripartite delegations from each country will discuss the findings of the survey and work out a strategy to address the capacity building needs. ■

## Creative Expressions Unleashed



InnovEd, the innovation for the education sector project, is an opportunity for our school children to let their creative potential flow. Participants are unanimous to welcome the project. Etienne, 6 years, admitted that the project gave him the opportunity to

look at the different perspectives that should

be considered in order to be successful. For Kaveesh, 5 years, the InnovEd project allowed him to devise a robot that can feed individuals. Vandana, 4 years, recognised that the project enabled her to use her drawing skills. Joëlle, 17 years, found that the project enabled her, through the brainstorming sessions and teamwork, to identify the needs of the community and to unleash her creativity to propose original solutions to the problems identified.



A future house



A model classroom



UV detective pen



Kaleidoscopic box

The above pictures are some projects proposed.

*InnovEd National Exhibition will be opened to the general public on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September from 1 p.m. from 4 p.m. and Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Octave Wiéhé Auditorium, University of Mauritius, Réduit.*

To learn more about the InnovEd Project, click [here](#). ■

## Enterprise Productivity Enhancement

Early September will see NPCC launch the first leg of an eight-month mission aimed at developing economic productivity measurement and management systems for enterprises in the manufacturing and service sector. Many enterprises function without the appropriate information systems to support management decision making whereas if equipped with better information systems, managers may better identify areas of costs that are going out of control, and put in place appropriate measures to ensure that profitability targets are effectively reached.

Dr. R.M. Ramsay, productivity consultant with more than forty years experience, has developed the RAPMODS (Ramsay Productivity Modeling System), a productivity cockpit that provides different productivity indicators. These indicators determine the productivity of various input resources like labour, raw materials, equipment, and overheads to the total productivity of the enterprise hence giving a better picture of the performance at different levels of the organisation. The results, therefore, determine the areas where effective actions need to be taken for improved productivity and financial results.

During the first stage of the mission, the NPCC with the expertise of Dr. Ramsay will be developing enterprise performance indicators for a pilot group of companies. These companies will benefit from training programmes on performance / productivity management systems, followed by in-plant interventions. One of the deliverables will be the development of user-friendly productivity measurement software to facilitate enterprise performance monitoring and decision making. Interested companies wishing to participate in the project can contact NPCC on -  
Tel.: 211 8118 or email: [natpro@intnet.mu](mailto:natpro@intnet.mu). ■

## Pollution Prevention for Households

Every household contains its share of hazardous substances such as paint, toilet bowl cleaners, used motor oil and pesticides which are potentially harmful to human health and the environment. Improper use or handling of these household hazardous substances can have minor effects ranging from eye and throat irritations, to headaches, dizziness and nausea, or more serious effects such as skin rashes, burns, liver or kidney damage, cancer or birth defects. In extreme circumstances they may lead to death. Improper disposal of these substances through household drains or storm drains can result in costly disruptions of waste water systems, serious injury to waste handlers and the contamination of local air and water resources.

In many cases, the use of non-toxic alternatives or appropriate disposal methods will decrease many health and environmental threats created by household hazardous substances and wastes. Using non-hazardous alternatives will result in a safer home and environment at a fraction of the cost, since the alternatives are often less expensive. Proper use and disposal of household chemicals will protect the environment, and also save the cost of environmental clean-ups.

Below are a few non-toxic alternatives that can replace household hazardous substances

### Product

Window Cleaner

### Non-hazardous alternative

For windows and mirrors, use 2 tsp. vinegar to 1 qt. water, or try 1/2 cup vinegar, 1 qt. water and 1 tbsp. rubbing alcohol, let dry and polish with newspaper.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Drop in 1 denture tablet, allow to foam for 5 minutes, brush then flush. Clean with baking soda or coat bowl with paste of lemon juice and borax; let stand, scrub.

Surface Cleaner

Mix 1 tsp. liquid soap and 1 tsp. borax with 1 qt. water. For tile and bathroom fixtures - use baking soda dissolved in water or 1/2 lemon dipped in borax. Use toothpaste for light stains.

Shoe Polish

Avoid polishes which contain trichloroethylene, methylene chloride, or nitrobenzene. Rub with lemon juice and buff with soft cloth.

Insecticides

Blend 6 cloves of crushed garlic, 1 minced onion, 1 tbsp. dried hot pepper and 1 tsp. pure soap in 4 qts. hot water. Let sit 1-2 days. Strain before using. Or place 1 cigarette in 1 quart water overnight. Strain and spray.

Air Fresheners

Set out vinegar in an open dish. Use an open box of baking soda in enclosed areas such as refrigerators or closets. Add cloves and cinnamon to boiling water and let simmer, Potpourri (a mixture of dried flowers treated with scented oils) is available at many bath shops, and works well in a sachet or simmered on the stove. Scented candles also do the trick, but beware of fire hazards.

(Source: Homewise: pollution prevention for consumers: a guide to household hazardous substances and non-hazardous alternatives). ■

*Making your own cleaners from common kitchen supplies is one of the easiest ways to start practicing pollution prevention.*

## Test the Innovation Capacity of Your Business

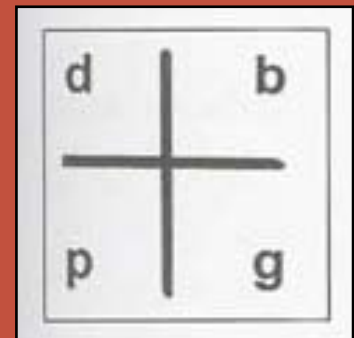
In this highly competitive business world, innovation has become the key to success. Organisations, large or small, have to re-evaluate their products, services, and even their corporate culture if they want to maintain their competitiveness in the global markets of today. If you want to know how innovative your business is, spare some time and take this [quiz](#) which will generate an innovation audit that will help you make the needed moves to improve your innovation productivity. ■

## Standardizing Benchmarking to Achieve Results

Benchmarking is one way to improve your supply chain's competitive advantage. Stephanie Carlin provides easy guidelines designed to help overcome any challenges benchmarking may present.

To know more, [click here](#). ■

### Mind teaser



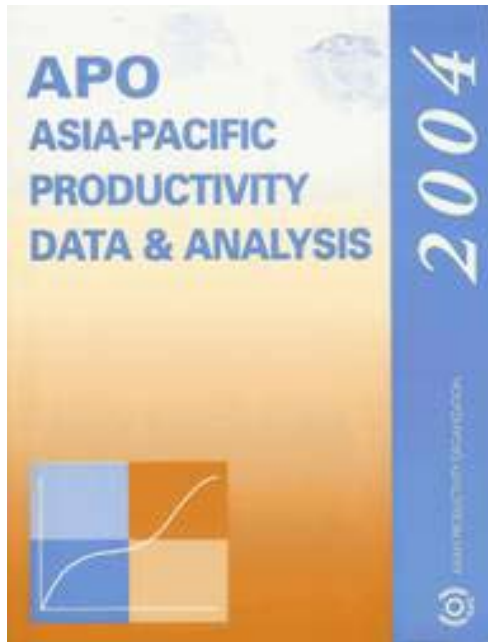
### The Problem to solve...

**In the diagram, which letter is most out of place?**

See page 4 for the solution to the problem

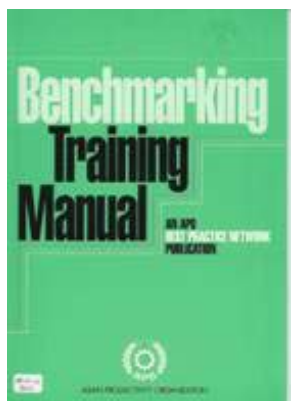
## Recent Additions to the Knowledge Centre

Asian Productivity Organization: **Asia-Pacific productivity data and analysis 2004**. Tokyo: Asian Productivity Organization, 2004. 261p., graphs, tables. ISBN: 9283311450



This fourth edition of economic and productivity data on the Asian Productivity member countries provides more information as ninety-four indicators are used to compare data. In this edition, national analysis reports which review human resources development based on data collected in the member countries are included. The book also features an introduction to the economic productivity concept so as to generate more interest in enterprise productivity measurement.

**Benchmarking training manual**. Tokyo: Asian Productivity Organization, 2005. 127p. ISBN: 9283323564



Knowledge on best practices provides a competitive advantage for organisations in the knowledge-based economy. Whether in manufacturing or services, in the private or public sector, enterprises must benchmark themselves against the best standards or practices worldwide to achieve a competitive advantage and business excellence. The knowledge gained could also be used to adapt and innovate the best practices and thus introduce methods that are "better than the best".

This benchmarking training manual is designed to help National Productivity Organisations (NPOs) recognize the usefulness of the Asian Productivity Organisation Best Practice Network methodology framework; learn how to apply the steps in the methodology; understand their role as well as the role of other parties in applying the framework; understand the deliverables for each step of the methodology; and brief and train their participating client organizations. The manual is structured as a practical "how-to" guide that will help NPOs and their clients adopt the methodology framework. It is restricted to the "learning and sharing" aspects of benchmarking, which is the basis for the Asian Productivity Organisation Best Practice Network.

**The greatest hits of cleaner production, pollution prevention and sustainable business**. Seattle: Hamner and Associates LLC, 2003.



Cleaner Production (CP) is the international term for "sustainable business", reducing environmental impacts from processes, products and services by using better management strategies, methods and tools. This CD-ROM is a collection of the best non-copyright publications and software in its field. It is intended for business managers, government officials, development programme managers, teachers and students. It contains information to help any organization dramatically improve its efficiency, reduce waste and pollution, and operate in a more environmentally sustainable way.

CHOME, Etienne: **Apprendre à mieux gérer nos conflits**. Roche Bois: Regent Press, 2005. 330p., ill., ref.. ISBN: 9990399611



L'auteur offre une synthèse originale et novatrice des techniques reconnues pour leur efficacité en communication et en négociation. Il donne accès aux meilleurs acquis et recherches dans ces domaines. Il les applique d'une manière

claire et précise à nos relations de tous les jours, en couple, en famille, entre collègues. Sa visée est pragmatique de bout en bout; il fournit les moyens d'une véritable révolution intérieure et l'art de tirer des accords de nos désaccords. ■

### Mind teaser

The solution to the problem

#### The Problem to solve

The normal tendency is to go into the problem, instead of backing up. When you go in, you frame the problem, which creates boundaries, and when you create boundaries, you limit your solutions.

When you go into something, you tend to spend all your time rearranging what is already there. Only by moving outside the framework are you able to add, subtract, substitute, magnify or simplify what you have. If you are too close to something, you won't see it, like the timeless example of not seeing the forest for the trees.

The answer to which letter is most out of place in the diagram is, of course the t or, if you turn the page slightly, the x. Children don't see the structure in the centre as a separation for four letters, but as a letter in itself, and a letter which is much larger than the others.

Children see the t or the x faster than adults. That's because adults immediately go into a problem, while children and childlike adults look for the simple solution first, which often means looking at the whole picture before going in. Creativity denotes the ability to put a larger frame than you are used to around all situations.



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