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—Joanne Abdullah

THE JOB TO BE DONE

Sony Corporation, headquartered in Tokyo, is a leading manufacturer of audio, video, communications, and information technology products for the consumer and professional markets. Its music, motion picture, television, computer entertainment, and online businesses make Sony one of the most comprehensive entertainment companies in the world. Sony recorded consolidated annual sales of approximately \$67 billion for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2005, and it employs 151,400 people worldwide

Since its inception in 1946, very few companies have been able to match Sony's track record for invention and innovation. Sony's mission is to establish an “ideal” factory that puts emphasis on the spirit of freedom and open-mindedness; a workplace that inspires the fulfillment of the creative and innovative potential of its employees. Sony EMCS Malaysia is a key manufacturing plant for Sony in South-East Asia producing a wide range of television, video, audio and hi-fi products.

In 1993, the 7 Habits workshop was introduced as a core training program for managerial levels in Sony TV Malaysia, one of the five plants in Malaysia. In relation to this, key employees were also trained to be facilitators and the in-house program was implemented throughout the organization in 1994. The facilitators were required to not only practice the principles of 7 Habits, but also serve as a reference point for employees who might require guidance. The 7 Habits Club was formed as a supplement to this activity, meeting weekly to discuss the impact of the habits on employees' personal and professional lives.

SOLUTION

By 2004, Sony manufacturing plants in Malaysia were consolidated progressively to become known as Sony EMCS Malaysia. Mr. Rathakrishnan Vellaisamy, Director of Human Resources spearheaded the successful implementation of 7 Habits in Sony EMCS Malaysia. To date, over 1000 employees and more than 80% of management staff have attended the training program. Mr. Vellaisamy has also been instrumental in sharing the successful case study in Malaysia with his Sony HR colleagues, which contributed to gradual implementation of the program in various Sony companies in the region.

Sony EMCS Malaysia is not unionized but it has a “Joint Consultative Committee” (JCC), which has representatives from the employees and management. This JCC meets monthly and discusses issues related to employee well-being. In 1997, prior to consolidation, in Sony TV Malaysia, the relationship between the employee and management representatives was not good. There was a lack of trust and many issues remained unresolved. Following this, enlisting the help of local 7 Habits facilitators, an optimal training program was developed and deployed at a retreat. The immediate results of the training were clearly evident as the program progressed; the employee and management representatives who were not on good terms with each other prior to the event were smiling at one another. Discussions soon resumed, an atmosphere of proactiveness and understanding started to emerge, synergy between employee and management representatives was enhanced, and increased awareness of a principle centered leadership philosophy was achieved in quick succession. All new JCC members are required to attend the 7 Habits program to prepare themselves to be part of this culture.

RESULTS

According to Mr. Palu Karuppanan, Senior Manager of Human Resources, the 7 Habits program has enabled him to develop himself effectively whilst providing him with effective tools to successfully lead organizational change. Ms. Joanne Abdullah, Head of Staffing Training and Development Department stated “The 7 Habits program has empowered me in all aspects of my work and the habits taught have nurtured me to be a great leader and a professional at work.” SONY EMCS Malaysia brought together all Sony plants in the country with vastly different work cultures and values to function as one synergistic unit. The True Professional project was initiated in 2005 to inculcate an interdependent culture and benefit from the consolidation. FranklinCovey leadership principles and tools have been integrated into the organizational development programs, supporting teamwork and a culture of interdependence to achieve the objectives of the True Professional Project.