It was meant to be an unforgettable day for all of them and it definitely became one! The employees of car dealership, Axess, at Pailles had decidedly rolled up their sleeves and took their brooms in hand to tidy up their workplace and get rid of the horde of accumulating futile and useless objects and items that were hurdling their productivity.

The initiative was a joint undertaking between the NPCC and Axess, which was selected recently by the Japan Productivity Centre along with two other local enterprises as model companies. A whole afternoon was dedicated to implementing and putting into practice of the 5S concept on Tuesday 11 July in the different departments of Axess, where hundreds of items ranging from used spare parts, old documents stashed in offices, worn out tires, damaged equipment, broken down engines and other objects that had invaded considerable space in the premises of the car dealer, were moved away.

Right from its showroom, through the front office, passing through the workshops, the stores and the two other units of Axess at Bagatelle and Riche Terre, the employees did not leave any stone unturned to spot out any object that was not in use and were thus elbowed out right away. The objects were piled up in red tagged areas whereas objects that were not sure of being discarded were brought to orange tagged areas to decide their fate afterwards.

According to Mr. Antoine d’Unienville, General Manager at Axess, it was high time that the whole eco-system of the car dealership start breathing some fresh air. “I must say that this is an important exercise for all the employees at Axess in an effort to increase our productivity. We ourselves were stunned with the amount of useless objects that had amassed in the different spaces which could have been used for more productive activities,” says Mr. d’Unienville.

Mr. Dev Appalswamy, Officer in Charge of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC), had stressed on the importance to carry out such an exercise and the positive results that it could bring towards a continuously enhanced productivity level across all departments.
DR. SANTHI KANOKTANAPORN TALKS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PRODUCTIVITY

The Secretary General of the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), Dr. Santhi Kanoktanaporn, led a conference on the theme “Future of Productivity” at Cyber Tower 1 in Ebène. Dr. Santhi was in Mauritius in the context of a training programme delivered by the APO for African productivity practitioners.

More than 200 participants from various institutions and corporates marked their presence at the conference.

Dr. Santhi spoke about the challenges that most countries are facing to keep at par with the development in technology as well as economic factors such as demand and production.

According to the Secretary General of the APO, while it will always be a question about revisiting our business and governance models, it is also true that to be qualified as a high income nation, it is an imperative for the country to constantly energise the local economy and adapt itself to the regional and international economic conditions. Hence, the need to reinvent business models in different economic sectors is increasingly being felt in Mauritius. It has become more than crucial and high time that our productive sectors embrace new activities and novel business practices to enter a new economic cycle that focuses on innovation which will, as a multiplier effect, boost private investment, exports and productivity.

Be it manufacturing industries, the hotel sector or agriculture and last but not the least, the public sector, it goes without saying that innovation has a critical role to play in virtually every sector that we can think of.

As rightly pointed out by Dr. Santhi, productivity is not a question about increasing production quantitatively but goes beyond accounting calculations. It is all about a change in the mindset of people, employers and employees alike, in an effort to optimize resources and do the best out of the available limited resources and most importantly to generate new solutions to deal with never-ending challenges coming from both the physical world and social world.

Dr. Santhi stressed that the next wave of innovation should be sustainable, which implies that we must explore the mega trends to remain competitive and productive, namely quality, information technology and Sustainable Development.

For Dr. Santhi, the new approach and direction in managing productivity is sustainable productivity as he defines it:

“Excellence in productivity no longer guarantees that your organization will survive and thrive in the world of constant change and uncertainty.”

In a nutshell, time has come for all of us to think and act differently in light not only of the diminishing resources, but because of the new world order, under which we have to keep ourselves abreast of the latest evolution in the world of technology, the latest trends in lifestyles and consumption patterns.
INTERVIEW OF KETAN VARIA, KINETIK SOLUTIONS IN MAURITIUS

International lead consultant, Ketan Varia, was in Mauritius in May this year to host a two-day workshop on the theme ‘Actionable Analytics for Process Excellence’ at the NPCC.

On the sidelines of the workshop that regrouped professionals from different industries, Mr. Varia gave us an insight into the world of data and explains why the need for a data culture is being felt more than ever.

You talk a lot about data in your presentations and discussions. Why has attention to data become so crucial?

I always take my inspiration from Edwards Deming who was a quality guru. I learnt a lot from him. He has a very famous quote. He says “In God we trust, all others must bring data”. Data actually gives you the opportunity to look at core hard facts rather than making assumptions and judgments. It allows you to look at information in a logical way. The thing with data is that it has to be processed in a standard way that gives you insight. Otherwise, data would just be a set of numbers. So you need the right tools to give you that insight. Data is absolutely fundamental in business processes and we need to ensure that we are using those data logically.

According to your observation, have you at least found the data culture emerging?

You have some very huge and good corporations here that absolutely use data. But that data is likely to be lagged data, that is data which only tells you how things have been done after the event, for example, what are the incomes, revenues, costs are like and the productivity per person. The data that I am keen to look at is data around the process itself, that it how the process towards decision making is going on. It means that you can correct it, learn from it and put feedback into it. That’s the core part. Then the end results come out much better in terms of decision making.

You perhaps imply that we are not using data the proper way. Is the situation serious?

It’s not that we are not doing it the proper way. I just think we can do it better and create a better bottom up process of looking at data. It is not just the top people of the organisation who look at data but also everyone at the bottom.

As a business consultant, you just said we are yet to implement a full-fledge data culture in Mauritius. Yet it is a fact that Mauritius is doing really well on the African scale in terms of all the metrics and indices where Mauritius is at the top position. What does that imply to you?

Surely Mauritius is doing much better than the whole of Africa. We need to understand that Africa got issues such as governance and leadership as well as politics. This means that building a data culture in many parts of Africa is difficult. This becomes even more difficult in the public sector as there is the tendency for leaders to change at frequent intervals. Yet, there are some very good private industries in Africa which are doing this but they still have a very long way to go. I think what you have in Mauritius is unique in Africa. You have good governance. You have a very stable economic and political environment. People are protected by the laws. People’s health and wealth are taken care of which means people are more likely to get involved in their workplace wanting to improve. This advantage in Mauritius means that the effort to implement a real data culture here should not meet any hurdles.
InnovEd 2017 was launched in a new dimension at the Ecole Hotelière Sir Gaëtan Duval at Ebène on Thursday 30 March. The ceremony was attended by students and teachers as well as representatives of ministries and other institutions. The event was also an occasion to honour the students of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) who participated in InnovEd 2016. It was the first time that MITD students participated in InnovEd.

InnovEd 2017 was unveiled by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, Mr. Chettandeo Bhugun.

Tools to facilitate participating teams are being hosted online on an e-learning platform (www.npccinnovation.org) that will help to foster creativity among students. The projects will be showcased with prototypes. Social media will be used for on-going communication among teams and participants throughout the duration of the project.

Another competency to be developed by the participants to enable them to innovate with this new dimension of InnovEd is the ability to collaborate online to identify problems and come up with solutions to these problems.

According to Mr. Mulloo, we need leadership at all levels. Referring to the projects conceived by the MITD students for InnovEd 2016, Mr. Mulloo described the event as a celebration of leadership and entrepreneurship while he praised the passion and hard work of the participants.

Mr. Dev Appalswamy, the Officer In Charge of the NPCC, said in his intervention that we are at an important turning point in the path of growth and development as Mauritius envisions joining the league of high income economies.

On the other hand, InnovEd 2016 proved to be a real launchpad for MITD students who performed beyond expectations. The practical projects presented showed the degree of their ingenuity and creativity. Their projects were showcased at the InnovEd exhibition held at the Ecole Hotelière Sir Gaëtan Duval on Friday 30 March.

InnovEd allows to collaborate online to identify problems and create solutions.

“The spirit of innovation should always prevail among the citizens of the nation. Innovation is about making things useful and creating value for ourselves and the society at large.”

Sanjiv Mulloo, Chairman NPCC

“When we talk of innovation, it is not only in terms of introducing innovative products and services from a commercial perspective. Innovation today goes beyond the concept of bringing novelty in a commercial offering and brushes all aspects of our lives. It is present in our personal lives as much as in our professional lives”

Chettandeo Bhugun, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms

“As a small and open economy, our economic prospects are inevitably intertwined with global economic developments. To cope with these, and countless other challenges, we need to build resilience and develop future readiness strategies that help us thrive.”

Dev Appalswamy, Officer in charge NPCC
**AND THE WINNERS ARE…**

**Winner:** Sir Ramparsad Neerunjun Training Centre.  
**Project:** Producing electricity using human heat

The team from Sir Ramparsad Neerunjun Training Centre at Ebène won the first prize. They presented a project on “Producing electricity using human heat”. The central piece of this project is a chair which when occupied, creates an electrical energy from human heat. The energy is deemed enough to power small devices including mobile phones and mini fans.

**First Runner Up:** Lycée Polytechnique Sir Guy Forget.  
**Project:** Inflator – Inflating tyre using exhaust gas

The first runner up was Lycée Polytechnique Sir Guy Forget for their project ‘Inflator – Inflating tyre using exhaust gas’. This project involves a kit that helps a driver inflate a flat tyre with air pumped from the exhaust pipe through an inflator.

**Second Runner Up:** La Tour Koenig Training Centre  
**Project:** Tool kit for power source to power low energy equipment

The second runner up was La Tour Koenig Training Centre for their project ‘Tool kit for easy and practical storage of garment making tools’. The tool kit comes with modules that can power devices that require low energy consumption at home.

The winning team was handed a trophy and a certificate as well as gifts from the NPCC as well as tokens from the NPCC’s sponsor, OGU. All the other participants were handed certificates and gifts.
AFRICAN PRODUCTIVITY PRACTITIONERS GATHER IN MAURITIUS FOR APO TRAINING

Some forty African productivity practitioners, including 10 from Mauritius, followed the Development of Advanced Productivity Practitioners course from the 6th to 17th February at the Gold Crest Hotel in Quatre Bornes. The course was delivered by the resource persons of the Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) and was wholly funded by the Government of Japan. Mauritius became the second country in Africa to have hosted this course which has so far taken place in South Africa.

The 10-day training was organised under the APO’s special programme for Africa in collaboration with Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA). The training was conducted by APO trainers from Malaysia and Phillipines.

Besides Mauritius, the countries represented included Botswana, Burkina Faso, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The training was officially opened by Mrs. Usha Dwarka Canabady, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade.

As part of the training programme, two observational site visits were organised at the Registrar General’s Office and Sofap. The main objective was to allow the participants have an opportunity to apply what they learned from the modules in the context of productivity and quality improvement. The visits gave the participants opportunity to identify the strengths, good practices and success factors of the organisations and to learn about the opportunities for improvement and challenges.
SOME 150 WOMEN ‘GROOMED’ BY THE NPCC

Some 150 women across the island were ‘groomed’ in different aspects as part of the NPCC’s drive to contribute further to the empowerment of women in Mauritius. The grooming sessions spanned over the months of January and February in the Women Empowerment Centres. The initiative was a collaboration between the NPCC and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

The grooming sessions enabled participants to assess their own skills and qualities, recognise their strengths and weaknesses and set goals in order to realise and maximise their potential.

The topics covered during the sessions included ‘It’s All About Grooming’, Leadership and Communication Skills, Effective Public Speaking, Advocacy and Lobbying for Gender Equality. The topics were designed to respond to the needs of the women community mostly engaged in small businesses. The objective of the grooming sessions was to empower the women entrepreneurs to start or to carry on their businesses with more confidence and enhance their self-development.

The participants showed their appreciation and interest to the grooming sessions and even expressed their desire for additional sessions. They also appreciated the methodology used for the delivery of the training programme which they say was clear, informative and very much adapted to them.

NPCC SIGNS MOU WITH AMM

The National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Association of Mauritian Manufacturers (AMM) under which the NPCC will help local manufacturers abide by the highest manufacturing norms while assisting them at the same time in uplifting their operations through the NPCC’s Enterprise Transformation Programme.

Companies that are unable to achieve the conformity to obtain the ‘Made in Moris’ label are actually referred by the AMM to the NPCC for intervention. The NPCC will help the enterprises in areas where improvements are needed, after which they will be able to reapply for the ‘Made in Moris’ label.

The AMM launched the “Made in Moris” initiative to promote locally manufactured products and to encourage Mauritians to consume more products manufactured by local companies. Companies which apply for the ‘Made in Moris’ label undergo an audit by SGS.

The Enterprise Transformation Programme of the NPCC is an in-plant consultancy solution with practical training to continuously improve the effectiveness in both the private and public sectors. Under this initiative, the NPCC intervenes in the company to improve the performance of its staff and processes. The NPCC also assesses the business needs and assists the company in aligning the staff and processes so that the business can deliver results and secure significant gains.
NPCC COUNCIL MEMBERS VISIT WINNER’S ROCHES BRUNES

There is no better way to learn than “to go and see the Gemba” (the place of action and learn the best practices from the source). Mr. Sanjiv Mulloo, Mrs. Danielle Wong and Mr. Dev Appalswamy, respectively the chairman, council member and Officer in Charge of the NPCC, visited the Roches Brunes supermarket of Winner’s group on 18 November 2016 to experience how the employees of the company ensure that their operations, small and big, are tagged with the highest level of productivity.

The visit provided a very good insight of the operational, management and people development aspects at Winner’s.

The visit was part of a knowledge sharing and handing over of certificates ceremony that was organised at Winner’s Roche Brunes. The ceremony was also attended by the General Manager of Winner’s, Mr. Jean Philippe Venpin and Winner’s regional managers as well as Mrs. Françoise Marechal Charlotte, Head of Business Development and Consultancy at the NPCC and the team that worked on the project.

An Inventory Management System (IMS) was successfully implemented at Winner’s Roches Brunes in 2015-2016 by the NPCC. The project was extended to nine Winner’s outlets in 2016. The workers’ efforts and contribution towards the successful implementation of the IMS were rewarded both by the NPCC and the management team of Winner’s.

It is equally interesting to note that senior cadres of paint manufacturer Sofap Ltd also made a stopover at Winner’s Roches Brunes to learn about the supermarket group’s efforts to inculcate a culture of productivity in their operations. Winner’s emerged as a good inspiration for the paint company which was acquainted through Gemba walks ‘and presentations’ with the best practices adopted by the supermarket group as well as techniques and methods to face the change processes in their operations.
NPCC LAUNCHES STUDY TO PROMOTE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

How can we improve the integration of an increasing number of women in the local economy? To seek the answer to this question, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) set up a Productivity Committee chaired by council member, Mrs. Danielle Wong to study the female participation in the economy and to come up with an action plan.

The issue of promoting female participation in the economy is currently of both national and global interest. It is a fact that in most countries, including Mauritius, female unemployment is rampant leading to an under-utilisation of human resources, thereby impacting productivity and growth. For instance, women outnumbered men in the unemployment population during the first quarter of 2017. The 44,300 unemployed people in Mauritius counted more females (26,600) against males (17,700) during that period.

Various activities were organized such as focus group discussions, meetings with ministry representatives, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society in an effort to gather data relevant to the study. The information gathered will be used to develop an action plan to promote a healthier participation of Mauritian women in the economy.

Engaging Citizens Online

It is in the same vein that the NPCC launched Engaging Citizens Online (ECO), a platform for smart ideas, where the public will now be invited to discuss and provide their views on issues of national interest linked to productivity and quality.

ECO was unveiled with the first topic being ‘Promoting Female Participation in the Economy’. Crucial data pertaining to the reasons explaining the low presence of women in economic activities was compiled on the ECO platform. The idea behind the collection of data on the ECO platform is to promote evidence-based policy decisions.

The platform focuses on empowering citizens to be more engaged through the creation of a market place for ideas which can subsequently translated into projects.

While it is easy for most people to access information through the web, ECO makes it even easier for users to answer the questions for surveys and ensures a better participation of the public in forums that touch the lives of the whole population and ultimately influences policy decisions.

NPCC intends to gather as much views, opinions and suggestions as possible through the smart platform which can be accessed from www.npccmauritius.org/eco
THREE MODEL COMPANIES SELECTED AS INSPIRATION FOR BEST PRACTICES

It is always believed that inspiration plays a great role in changing the ways we do things. It is in the same spirit that three local companies, namely Scomat Ltée, Axess and Rey & Lenferna were selected as model companies to inspire other enterprises in Africa and to act as trendsetters in increasing productivity and the adoption of best practices.

These companies were selected for the year 2017-2018 by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan through the Japan Productivity Centre (JPC).

Following the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in August 2016 and the METI funded action planning session by the JPC for the Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA) in Mauritius in February 2017, the METI is now sponsoring the Model Company project in Mauritius for the year 2017-2018.

The NPCC has been working with the JPC in the past on developing success stories (model companies) of enterprise productivity improvement using 5S and Kaizen (continuous improvement activities).

Scomat Ltée, Axess and Rey & Lerferna will be showcased as examples of enhanced productivity through the adoption of 5S and Kaizen tools. They will be used as models for other companies to identify, reduce and eliminate Muda (non-value added activities).

The selection of the companies was based on a set of criteria including trade links with Japan and their acceptance to implement 5S and Kaizen tools. The model companies project is spearheaded by two Japanese experts namely Mr. Jim Sasaki, expert in 5S and Kaizen and Mr. Yukitoshi Tanno, consultant in SME management.

The two experts were part of a delegation that was in Mauritius in early May to deliver training to the NPCC consultants. Besides, three project managers namely Mr. Takumi Imoto, Mr. Daisuke Horibe and Mrs. Naomi Takikawa were also part of the delegation.

The delegation visited the potential companies during the first week of May followed by a training with Mr. Tanno for NPCC consultants during the second week to allow for the latter to develop and conduct training for middle managers and top management in November 2017 and January 2018.

It is to be recalled that the JPC held an Action Planning session for the PAPA and PAPA member’s National Productivity Organisations (NPOs) in Mauritius from 6 to 9 February. This took the form of a brainstorming session which had as objective to develop an action plan for PAPA and PAPA members and subsequent dispatch of Japanese consultants to Nation members for the Model Company project.

20 participants from PAPA member countries (two participants from each member namely, South Africa, Botswana, Mauritius, Nigeria, Kenya, Namibia, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mauritius) one from the African Union and one from PAPA Secretariat were invited to participate in the session. The participants were expected to outline the action plan to enhance productivity in their own country.
THE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE NOW AT JUST A CLICK AWAY

The Knowledge Centre of the NPCC has undergone an intense transformation recently as it steps into the digital era. This transformation is actually an essential step forward towards providing a better service to all the stakeholders who are on the lookout for information pertaining to productivity, competitiveness and quality among others. While entrepreneurs and professionals can always drop at the NPCC’s Knowledge Centre to consult our books, journals, periodicals and surveys, technology now allows them to learn about these publications at the comfort of their home and workplace as well as on the go through their mobile devices. Actually, the NPCC portal (www.npccmauritius.org) now provides access to an online platform where one can find information on the publications available.

Latest additions at the Knowledge Centre

A number of publications to guide entrepreneurs and professionals on productivity as well as management, administration and operations related subjects have been added to the horde of publications.

OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016
Author: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Outlook 2016 takes a more forward-looking perspective compared to previous editions. The STI Outlook 2016 also presents recent trends in STI in light of the fragile economic recovery, the scarcity of funding for innovation and entrepreneurship, mounting fiscal pressure, globalization and major societal challenges (climate change, ageing societies and growing inequality).

SME and entrepreneurship policy in Israel 2016
Author: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

This report examines Israel’s performance in stimulating SMEs and entrepreneurship and makes recommendations for government policy. A dual economy has gradually emerged in Israel, in which high rates of successful technology-based entrepreneurship contrast with low average productivity and growth in traditional SMEs. Israel has excellent framework conditions and programmes for technology-based start-ups and SMEs in areas such as R&D, high-level skills generation and venture capital finance. These strengths need to be maintained.

The secrets of great CEO selection
Author: CHARAN, Ram

When it comes to selecting a new CEO, judgment really matters. The choice may devastate a company or create enormous value. In his work advising companies, the author has observed that some board members are especially great at succession decisions. In this article, he describes how they go about picking the right candidate. Directors who excel at selection zero in on the two or three distinct capabilities that a CEO will need to thrive at the firm in question.

Lean supply chain management essentials: a framework for materials managers
Authors: KERBER, Bill; DRECKSHAGE, Brian J

Presenting an alternate approach to supply chain management, this book explains why the traditional materials planning environment, typically embodied by an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, is an ineffective support system for a company that wants to adopt lean practices. It begins by defining supply chain management basics, including roles, objectives, and responsibilities from a traditional framework. Next, it describes lean basics and explores the conflicts between lean and the traditional framework.

Beyond competitive advantage: how to solve the puzzle of sustaining growth while creating value
Author: ZENGER, Todd

Your company is turning in regular profits every year, and its market share is only getting bigger. Competitors can’t touch you. So why is your stock price so sluggish? The answer is as simple as it is cruel: investors aren’t interested in history, and they already know you’re profitable and competitive - that knowledge is baked into your stock price. Based on years of research and analysis, the book provides managers and executives with a framework for both sustaining value and creating growth.
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