

Making Mauritius Muda-Free



Eradicating all non-value adding activities (or Muda) has been a priority of the island state of Mauritius and some remarkable progress has been made. **Nikhil Treebhooonun**, Executive Director of the **National Productivity and Competitiveness Council** (a tripartite body set up by government to enhance productivity in Mauritius), puts forward some ideas of which we in the UK could do well to take heed.

Mauritius, a small island state in the Indian Ocean with a population of 1.2 million, is facing some daunting challenges in its efforts to be competitive, in order to improve the standard of living of its people. The removal of preferences under the new world trade order in gestation means that its continued development will have to rely on its competitiveness. Hence, productivity enhancement on a continuous basis has become a *sine qua non*.

To drive the productivity movement, the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) became operational in 2000. The question it had to answer immediately was: how can we improve productivity? After a brainstorming session, spanning over three days, a consensus was reached by all the participants coming from the private sector, trade unions, and the civil service that the core objective of NPCC should be "to develop a productivity culture". Culture has to do with the mindset, with people's attitudes and value systems. Therefore, tools had to be found to involve the whole population in the process of change, and to bring home to each and everyone that as citizens they are responsible for the state they live in.

Thus, a national sensitisation campaign was elaborated: Muda-Free Mauritius (MFM).

What is a Muda-Free Mauritius (MFM)?

Muda is bad. Waiting, searching, repairing, reworking, carrying out inventories, are some common Muda. Muda is a Japanese word for 'non-value adding' activities. It can also be understood as an obstruction to flows of activities (as applicable to processes within an office or a factory, for example). Identification, reduction and elimination of Muda leads to cost savings, improved efficiency of processes, better quality of products, on-time deliveries, finally adding up to business leadership and customer satisfaction, without any heavy financial investment.

Eliminating Muda is one of the fundamental activities of *Kaizen*, the philosophy of continuous improvement. A Muda-Free Mauritius therefore means a country that is efficient, clean and disciplined.

The concept of Muda is pregnant with philosophy. It refers to attitude and behaviour and encompasses civic responsibility and empowerment. It can be applied at home by the housewife, in schools, in enterprises, as well as in public organisations - in essence, wherever teamwork is desirable and achievable.

Another reason for choosing the Muda concept, for the campaign launched by the President of the Republic of Mauritius in May 2001, was because we had previously seen how it had been assimilated by management and workers at Sebna Ltd, a Mauritian bottling plant, where the first 5-day Gemba Kaizen Workshop was held. In addition, Muda is a word that initially makes one smile, and then triggers curiosity which is, of course, the start of the productivity journey. People are interested to know the meaning of the word - the same interest would not have been generated if 'wastage' or 'productivity' had been used, as these are concepts which most people believe they understand.

Since the word was new, it was decided to focus the campaign on concrete examples of Muda

The MFM Campaign

The first phase of the MFM campaign targeted the public at large, in particular school children because the latter are more open to new ideas and they are the citizens of tomorrow. It was also felt that they would put pressure on grown-ups to understand the meaning of Muda and thus they would act as a vehicle for awareness-raising on productivity. Since the word was new, it was decided to focus the campaign on concrete examples of Muda, namely "*dépi kan sofa guette television?*" (since when do sofas watch TV?) and "*dreams do not work with light*", ie, the chosen theme was not to indulge in the wasting of energy.

The campaign was successful but in some quarters Muda

has been associated only with household themes (electricity, water, telephone etc.). The second phase then concentrated on the corporate sector through the promotion of 5S (good housekeeping practices).

In fact, the Muda-Free Mauritius campaign had been designed in phases as illustrated in *Figure 1*. It had a two pronged approach of a) mass sensitisation and b) Kaizen focused training and sector-specific Gemba Kaizen Workshops, both geared towards identifying, reducing and eliminating Muda.

The response to this campaign has been positive, as demonstrated by the active involvement and commitment of the education sector. 200,000 signatures, gathered from 10,000 pledge sheets from primary and secondary schools, were returned to the NPCC. Attendance to public seminars, organised at the NPCC, included individuals and employees from different enterprises. 100 enterprises of the private sector and 40 ministries and parastatals (quangos) have delegated their staff to attend Gemba Kaizen Workshops. The Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations has been soliciting NPCC to sensitise employees from different enterprises to the concept of Muda and Kaizen. The Ministry of Civil Service Affairs has made efforts to build up capacity, through the training of about 100 civil servants as Kaizen facilitators in the public sector, and has also facilitated direct sensitisation on Gemba Kaizen principles to some 36 public sector departments by the NPCC. Since December 2002, it has embarked on a Muda-Free Public Service Campaign.



As at September 2003, 29 corporate bodies (of which 18 are ministries) had implemented the full Gemba Kaizen Workshops (4 to 5 days of in-plant intervention).

MFM in Action - the CPP as an Example

One project, which typifies the characteristics of a programme to make Mauritius Muda-Free, is the Mass Computer Proficiency Project (CPP). It started following a recommendation in January 2001 at Maryé Piké Nou Avansé, the national conference on productivity which involved all stakeholders, from ministers to individual citizens. It was agreed that an essential component of a productivity culture is universal IT awareness and literacy. A pilot project was worked out, beginning in

February 2001, with the newly set up University of Technology Mauritius (UTM) providing its computer laboratory. A Productivity Implementation Committee, comprising the National Computer Board, the Ministry of Information Technology represented by the Central Informatics Bureau, and the Mauritius College of the Air, worked on a programme. The Ministry of Education was favourable to three primary schools being approached for the project. Synergy was created to use idle resources for the benefit of all. Civic spirit was demonstrated by the students and lecturers of UTM who agreed to give the training on a voluntary basis. And the project was implemented in April 2001.

The pilot project was then presented and adopted in September 2001 by the Implementation Working Group (IWG), set up under the e-Education Committee (chaired by the Minister of Education), itself an emanation of the inter-ministerial committee on Cyber Island chaired by the Prime Minister. Other stakeholders were invited to implement the CPP at the national level. Given NPCC's role as initiator, and its experience in implementing activities at the grassroots level, the NPCC was entrusted with the responsibility of being the legal entity for the CPP, which is driven by a project team reporting to a Steering Committee of the IWG. As at August 2003, more than 8,000 citizens have been trained and there is a waiting list of another 8,000!

Conclusion

NPCC's mission is to make Mauritius Muda-Free, that it becomes a better place to live, work and play. This is the very first time that a country has undertaken to carry out a Muda-Free campaign that is national in scope. Along with the Kaizen Institute, with whom a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed, the NPCC is focused on disseminating - in government offices, private enterprises, schools, youth clubs, women's centres and families - the information, knowledge and tools necessary to wage war against Muda. This Muda consciousness and action-oriented approach can be achieved if - and only if - each and every Mauritian citizen is empowered to shoulder his or her civic responsibility and is willing to improve the way of doing things. The underlying philosophy, in Masaaki's own words, is:

*Manage yourself
Manage your family
Manage your country
Conquer the world.*

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