

Supervisors and senior managers skills training A crucial garment industry investment

The Training

To help Cambodia's garment industry meet the challenges of global competition and become even more successful, IFC-MPDF and ILO-*Better Factories Cambodia* are offering training to the whole industry to develop the capacity of garment industry supervisors. Designed to improve both labor-management relations and productivity, this training is an expansion of a successful training program IFC-MPDF and Gap Inc. piloted in 2005 and 2006 with 650 supervisors who oversee some 20,000 workers in Gap producer factories.

This 4-day Supervisory Skills Program has proven itself highly effective in changing leadership knowledge as well as behaviors. In an evaluation conducted in 2006 with 1,800 supervisors, managers and staff, results showed that the program improved both relations between workers and supervisors, and productivity.

The Supervisory Skills Program is designed to give participants a deep understanding of important leadership and supervision concepts and equip them to play a firm, fair and effective role as leaders and supervisors. Participants are also trained to avoid a passive or authoritarian style of leadership and to strike a fair balance between the interests of the company and the interests of staff. As evaluation shows, this training significantly improves staff motivation and morale, and leads to better company performance.

Program benefits:

- Better results due to active supervisory performance
- More highly motivated managers, supervisors and staff
- Improved staff-management relations
- Improved supervisor-manager relations
- Improved problem-solving and fewer errors due to more open and constructive communication
- Better communication and cooperation between sections
- Higher employee morale due to more respectful communication

Program Outcomes:

- Understand and perform the roles and responsibilities of a manager/supervisor
- Motivate staff through effective interpersonal relations
- Enforce discipline professionally in the work place
- Delegate work efficiently and ensure it is completed on time
- Correct staff in a way that builds performance
- Communicate better with superiors and staff
- Use an appropriate style of leadership and demonstrate authority appropriately



Program logistics

The 4-day training program is given for 7 hours a day, in two 2-day sessions, with a four to six week break between them. This break enables participants to put their newly acquired skills into practice and see how well the techniques work. The second 2-day block of training includes an opportunity for participants to share what they have learned from applying the training on the job. The training sessions also include video-taped practice of new supervisory behaviors that allows participants to see for themselves how well they are doing.

Proven success

IFC-MPDF evaluated the impact of the pilot training program in April 2006, interviewing supervisors, workers, department heads and human resources managers (1,800 people in total). Results show that nearly 100% of supervisors found that the program helped them to develop new knowledge and skills they could easily apply back on the job, and HR managers stated that supervisors' problem solving skills were significantly better. Evidence for this could be seen in a 12 percent drop in employee warnings. Absenteeism improved too by 8 percent as did production quality (39 percent fewer in in-line rejections and 44 percent fewer shipment rejections). Workers' ratings of their supervisors were also higher, with respondents stating that supervisors' performance had improved by as much as 7 percent. The trained supervisors also rated 7 to 10 percent higher when compared to untrained supervisors in two non-participating factories.

Specialized training for senior managers

One of the important lessons learned from the IFC-MPDF/Gap initial supervisory pilot training is that senior managers should be encouraged to attend similar training so they can strongly endorse the new behaviours their supervisors are using and mentor them if needed. Towards this end, a version of a 12-hour supervisory training has been developed for senior managers that covers the same content and hands-on practice but is tailored for the roles of senior management.

Maintaining and improving industry competitiveness

Improving supervisory practices is crucial to the success of Cambodia's 2.5 billion dollar garment industry. In the face of increasing competition from regional players such as Vietnam and China, the garment industry depends on maintaining its reputation for good labor standards. As a World Bank Group survey of garment buyers published in 2005 stressed, Cambodia's reputation for good labor practices is one of the main reasons international buyers continue sourcing garments from Cambodia. Improving labor/management relations and productivity is also important, and training can make the difference between success and failure.

What people say about the training

Before the training if supervisors could not solve a problem, they would just report to the department head, but after the training they knew how to solve the problem themselves. (Zhang Min, Assistant Factory Manager).

The training has changed the way we work, especially our attitudes, teaching us to be more patient. We realise we don't have to behave in a win-lose manner. Now we try to find a solution that is good for management as well as workers. (Kung Leakhena, Factory Supervisor).

Before the training, when my supervisor saw something wrong she would complain again and again. Since the training, she has stopped complaining and now explains how to do the work properly. (Dan Lay Eang, Worker).

Details of how to apply for both the supervisors' and senior managers' programs can be found on the IFC-MPDF website - www.mpdf.org and ILO Better Factories Cambodia website - www.betterfactories.org/ilo

For more information about the training, email: pdoung@ifc.org or sokha@ilo.org

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When you think about training, don't think of it as an expense – think of it as a necessary investment.

Dorothy Berry, Vice President for Human Resources and Administration. International Finance Corporation.