

Clearly, A Good Model

By
Naseema Banu Maideen

Ever since the new centering machine replaced the old one that lacked automation on the shop floors of Qioptiq Singapore Private Limited, quality and quantity of business operations have shown significant progress.

Each machine now produces 160 pieces at one shift in the lens centering process unit, which is an increase of 60 per cent in production output before automation. Operators in this unit have also upgraded and are trained to be setters.

Manpower efficiency has also improved by 33 per cent in the ultrasonic cleaning process unit.

“Only two men are now required to man the automated machine, compared to three men previously. With the automatic cleaning method, we do not have to repeatedly perform the cleaning process of transferring the trays of optical components from one bath to another,” said Mr Low Boon Heng, 54, a Tradesman, who works with Qioptiq, a precision optical components manufacturer.

The company, organised by Singapore Industrial & Services Employees’ Union, has been rolling out a series of automation processes despite the start of the downturn in 2007. It has automated its high volume business units in three areas of the production of optical lenses – the grinding process, centering process and ultrasonic cleaning process.

79 per cent or 434 of the production workers at Qioptiq are multi-skilled and are equipped to drive the company’s progress with its Cheaper Better Faster strategies.

The workers are further motivated with a bi-monthly Productivity Bonus of one week’s salary when the company achieves its sales target. Even though 2009 was a tough year, Qioptiq’s workers still received seven weeks of Productivity Bonus.

Said NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and SISEU Executive Secretary Josephine Teo:



“Our efforts to be Cheaper Better Faster has strengthened our competitive position to be a world class optics solution provider. More importantly, such a mindset lays a solid foundation for building a dedicated, innovative and competitive team for future challenges.”

Chua Teow Tzing, Managing Director, Qioptiq Singapore Private Limited

“This example shows very clearly that becoming Cheaper Better Faster doesn’t mean that the company reduces the workers’ wages or makes them work in unreasonable conditions.

“Qioptiq has found ways to meaningfully up-skill the workers’ abilities to contribute to production performance, and also reward them.”

ASG Teo cited Qioptiq as a model CBF company at a Learning Journey organised by the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute for about 50 union leaders on 4 January 2010.

“As the economy recovers, there will continue to be challenges. What the Labour Movement would like to see is more and more businesses growing by adopting CBF strategies.”

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say said

that the Labour Movement is gearing up for an offensive strategy, adopting the CBF approach to be able to head towards a sustainable economic recovery.

“In 2009, our priority was mainly to save jobs to play the defensive game. In 2010, we are going to adopt a different strategy and go on the offensive. We have to go on the offensive because countries all over the world will not just focus on economic growth but also on employment growth,” he said.

While he cautioned that 2010 will still be filled with challenges, he spurred more companies to ride on opportunities like Qioptiq has done. Moving forward, Qioptiq will focus on capability development for infra-red optics manufacturing.

Singapore Must Be More CBF Than Others

By
Lin Jiahui

About a week before the last page of last year’s calendar was ripped off, NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say told some 150 union leaders who had graduated from courses organised by the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute in 2009 that they can expect the new year to be a better year for Singaporeans as the country recovers from the global economic downturn.

“The job market in 2010 will be brighter and this is sooner than expected. The labour market will tighten because the government has decided to tighten on the employment of foreign workers. This will help increase the quality and productivity of the Singapore labour market,” said



SG Lim on 22 December 2009.

SG Lim also cautioned that although the worst seems to be over for Singapore, China’s and India’s economies are rapidly improving.

“We must make sure that no matter how other countries are cheaper, better and faster, we need to be even more Cheaper Better Faster. This can only be done if union leaders work together and make sure that our workforce is an inclusive one.”