

Interviews with JCCP Counterparts (Saudi Arabia & Oman)

To produce a promotional DVD of JCCP, JCCP has interviewed Mr. Fareed Z. Kamfar, Maintenance Manager (then), Ras Tanura Refinery, Saudi Aramco, and Mr. Masoud S. Al-Msalmy, General Manager, Corporate Support, Oman Refinery and Petrochemicals Company, on their views of JCCP activities seen from an oil-producing country. Since the views the two gentlemen shared with us are highly valuable and enlightening, we introduce some excerpts from the interviews below.

1. Saudi Arabia

Mr. Fareed Z. Kamfar

Maintenance Manager (then), Ras Tanura Refinery, Saudi Aramco

Interviewer: Mr. Kamfar, thank you very much for accepting this interview. You participated in a JCCP course once in 1984, so you are one of our oldest participants and are probably very familiar with JCCP activities. What has impressed you most, in your first participation in a JCCP course in 1984 and your second in 2008?

Mr. Kamfar: I was 25 or so when I participated in a JCCP course for the first time in 1984. The JCCP course was my window to Japan's culture and business environment.

Since then, I began to read books, attend lectures, and watch TV programs on Japan to become more familiar with Japan. After my last visit to Japan in October 2008, I personally began giving lectures about Japanese culture and how business is run in Japan.

There are many differences between Japan and the Middle East. We live by the Middle Eastern culture and receive the influence of the Western business culture. We cannot fully understand how the Japanese conduct business unless someone who has a perspective on both cultures provides a link. Only then can we see the true picture of Japanese business practices. Therefore, we need someone who would make that effort.

I cannot say that I understand Japan to the



*Mr. Fareed Z. Kamfar,
Maintenance Manager (then)*

level that is necessary to provide that link, but I think I have gained a good understanding of Japanese business practices. I see that Japanese businesses are founded on a culture that values personal relationships, and have learnt the concept, "trust before business," from Japan. In our business environment, business comes first, then trust. This is probably one of the greatest differences between how business is conducted in Japan and the Middle East.

I have also learnt that Japanese companies place importance on educating their employees to further improve business. To us, this is a completely different approach to conducting business.

These are some of the brief impressions I have of the past 25 years of exposure to Japanese culture.

Interviewer: What do you think is the most distinctive feature of JCCP programs, compared to those of other training institutions?

Mr. Kamfar: This is an interesting question.

We have oil, and we have the money to buy anything we need, be it technology, hardware, or training. However, we cannot buy people's minds and brains.

Japan has a precious resource that we do not have-human resources. We could benefit a lot if we can manage to tap into that resource. In this respect, I think JCCP is unique in that it shows and teaches us the importance of human resources and how we may apply that knowledge to the Middle East.

Many people in the Middle East still do not know much about Japan. However, creating more opportunities to experience Japan could cultivate more interest in learning about the country. Japan has good business practices, successful businesses, and high-quality products. From there, we take an interest in Japan and wish to know more. Therefore, what I think is outstanding about JCCP is that it taps into people's brains and minds. It is a remarkable approach. For me, JCCP is the only window through which I can see Japanese culture, but I am hopeful that this window will expand and become a large gateway to Japan in the future.

Interviewer: How has JCCP contributed to Saudi Aramco in the past?

Mr. Kamfar: Many practices in Japan are similar to what we have, in terms of culture, society, and values, so it is not necessarily difficult to introduce Japanese practices to Saudi Arabia and adopt them at Saudi Aramco.

The Japanese are good at working together as a team. That is not to say that only the

Japanese engage in teamwork, because so do many other countries throughout the world. However, I think the Japanese particularly excel at teamwork.

As a result of adopting the idea of teamwork from Japan and beginning to work in teams, we are seeing large improvements in work efficiency compared to working as individuals. For example, we have an OME (Operation Maintenance Engineering) team in our company whose members are producing greater results by working as a team than as individuals.

Quality is another element. As all products produced by the Japanese are of high quality, by bringing that concept to our environment, we could also take our business to a higher quality level. The Japanese are diligent, and strive to deliver their work with precision. I think it is admirable that they spend a lot of time and energy performing their work but also enjoy it. We also believe that enjoying one's work is an important element in our jobs.

We are adopting many Japanese practices in our company. This past January, we had JCCP staff hold a TPM seminar. As TPM is a new concept to Saudi Aramco, it made a large impact on the participants, and we saw a lot of energy in the workshop. Even during the seminar, they gave instructions over the phone to start implementing TPM in their workplaces. They said they were glad they participated in the seminar, and that they wish to apply what they had learned to their own workplace. I think this would be a starting point for the implementation of TPM at Saudi Aramco, and in this way, what JCCP has been delivering since its founding has had a large impact on Saudi Aramco.

Interviewer: What future expectations do you have of JCCP?

Mr. Kamfar: I have been thinking about this since I visited Japan last October. We buy a lot of

Japanese products, including technologies and cars, because they provide high quality. However, we cannot buy the Japanese spirit and mind. I think Japan needs to open its small window and create a larger gate. I ask this not only of JCCP, but the entire country of Japan and its government.

I would like to make three proposals on how the Japanese can capture the minds of people in the Middle East by performing business in the Japanese way. Firstly, Japan could come to the Middle East and invest in education, and particularly in universities and vocational schools. This would capture the heart of every mother in Saudi Arabia, because they would want their children to receive a higher education and to have greater job opportunities. It would also open our window wider to Japanese business and culture.

Another proposal concerns the media. When we wish to learn about Japan, we need to read a book, see somebody who would lecture about Japan and Japanese business styles, or visit Japan. However, if there are programs on satellite TV that introduce Japanese culture and business, we could study about Japan more conveniently. Japan needs to make a stronger approach to penetrate the wall separating us.

Finally, I would also like Japan to bring to the Middle East businesses that will touch our lives. Such businesses would make us more familiar with the Japanese style of doing business, or at least allow us to experience for ourselves the true value of Japanese business. For example, American and European fast-food shops and coffee shops are changing the newer generation in the way they eat, the way

they behave, the way they interact with others, and the way they conduct themselves. In the same way, Japan should establish a presence in our daily lives, in order to understand us more. Japan has done an outstanding job of selling cars and IT, but it needs to make more effort to transform people's lifestyles.

This pertains not only to JCCP, but to all Japanese. Through the collective efforts of all Japanese people, I am certain you can make it happen.

Interviewer: I understand that managerial personnel at Saudi Aramco do not have their name on their uniform, but what made you decide to have your name on your uniform?

Mr. Kamfar: My last visit to JCCP in October 2008 had a profound impact on my personal actions. I saw that in Japanese refineries and industries, the management approaches the employees, whereas in our business, the management has employees come to them. After returning to my country, I decided to spend 70% of my time with my subordinates, and to put my name on my uniform so they can easily identify me. In Japan, personal relationships among employees and the trust that is born from those relationships are extremely important to success in doing business. Based on this understanding, I want everyone at the refinery to know me not as refinery manager, but as an individual. This is why I have my name on my uniform, and not my title.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for sharing your invaluable views.

Mr. Kamfar: Thank you.

2. Oman

Mr. Masoud S. Al-Msalmy

General Manager, Corporate Support, Oman Refinery and Petrochemicals Company

Interviewer: Mr. Al-Msalmy, what has impressed you most when you visited Japan?

Mr. Al-Msalmy: First of all, I would like to thank JCCP for all the assistance it has given to ORPC. Now, the relationship between ORPC and JCCP goes back 27 years, beginning just when the refinery was commissioned.

I have maintained ties with JCCP over the past 27 years, and have seen how JCCP programs have evolved with the advancement of Japanese technologies, and how our people have benefited from them. The technology we have acquired through those programs has provided the basis for the technology that we have today.

However, what I have found most impressive was JCCP's flexibility in responding and adjusting to our business needs and technological level.

Interviewer: What do you consider is the best feature of JCCP programs, compared to those of other training institutions?

Mr. Al-Msalmy: From the standpoint of a refinery, we find that JCCP programs come nearest to being tailor-made to suit our on-site technical needs. Not many organizations in the world do. While most of the programs offered by other organizations are generic, JCCP programs are refinery-specific, and are what we seek as a refining company.

I have also seen participants of JCCP programs take advantage of the opportunity of those programs to gain an intercultural experience. They meet their counterparts from many other countries and learn from them, in addition to learning from the instructors of the programs. They exchange ideas and share problem cases that have occurred at



*Mr. Masoud S. Al-Msalmy,
General Manager, Corporate Support*

their respective refineries and how they have solved those issues.

I have a specific example of how something that one of our engineers learned from the JCCP course in which he participated benefited us greatly. The knowledge he gained has been applied to our refinery. We were thinking that we would need to spend a large amount of money on solving the relevant issue, but with the solution our engineer came back with, we spent almost nothing, and still we were able to solve the issue. We appreciate the fact that JCCP provides opportunities to network with other participants in oil-producing countries.

Interviewer: What do you want your staff to learn at JCCP?

Mr. Al-Msalmy: Japan as a whole is respected for the way it values people. The Japanese style of business is unique, particularly at the supervisory level. Since it has proven successful in many ways, we would like our people to learn from Japan's vast experience.

Our people have taken part in many JCCP technical programs, but I would like them to realize that they need to achieve a balance between technical programs and supervisory level programs. This is because I believe that simply possessing technical knowledge is not enough. People need to take advantage of the knowledge they have. To do so, it is important that supervisors, or those poised to become supervisors, draw out knowledge from their staff and utilize it in their work.

I would like to see us adopt the strengths of Japanese management style to a much greater extent, by providing our people with greater opportunities to learn about Japanese supervisory skills at JCCP.

I would also like to see technical training programs become more extensive. When considering the distance between Japan and Oman and the time it takes to travel between the two countries, I would like to see fewer visits to workshops and plants in Japan. I recognize the advantage of such visits, but I think classroom sessions can also expose participants to both Japan's technical expertise and personal management skills.

I am fond of the Japanese management style. I just think that if JCCP provides a good balance of technical and supervisory programs that are both extensive and meaningful, JCCP programs as a whole would come to have an even greater impact.

Interviewer: How has JCCP contributed to ORPC in the past?

Mr. Al-Msalmy: If there is any company that

should be grateful to JCCP, it is ORPC. Like I have said earlier, almost our entire technical staff has participated in a JCCP program. We are able to do what we do today owing precisely to their JCCP experience. Even those who have gone on to become supervisors, area supervisors, and process managers have received JCCP training in the past. We sincerely appreciate the role JCCP has played in developing our personnel.

We would like to maintain this mutual cooperation with JCCP, so that we may continue to take advantage of JCCP facilities and programs and learn about Japan's technologies and experience.

Interviewer: What future expectations do you have of JCCP?

Mr. Al-Msalmy: I think JCCP has created for itself a unique platform of training programs that allows participants from various countries and various positions in different companies to create a global network of knowledge-sharing. It would be interesting if JCCP would take another step forward and create an electronic network, so that participants of JCCP programs could keep in touch with each other, discuss issues they face in their plants in a timely manner, and perhaps create occasions to visit each other. I think this would bring a significant change to how we conduct business. I would really like to see a phenomenal change in the platform of knowledge-sharing. I would really like to see this happen, and on our end, we are ready to provide whatever assistance is needed.