

Safety

Getting the Message Across



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Roads take a dreadful toll every year in deaths and injuries. Everyone is affected and everyone needs to play their role in combating road casualties. Roads are designed to be safer, cars are getting safer with new technologies like ABS brakes and airbags. Equally important is the human element and greater awareness and education of drivers is crucial to improving road-driving conditions. This is why JAMA sponsors biannual three-month safety campaigns and the latest was launched at the end of September.

The campaign promotes stark messages in its aim to ensure that all car occupants wear their seatbelts. The shock of a ten kilo child in a 40kmph crash is equivalent to 300kg. Such a force cannot be cushioned by a mother's lap and the stark message is that you must use a suitable child seat to protect your child properly. The message will be publicised on the radio and posters will appear in hospitals and women magazines.

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A Monthly Review
of the Japanese Motor
Vehicle Industry

The Supply Chain

Achieving World Class Supply Performance



Since December 1996, 8 Master Engineers from General Motors, Honda, Nissan, Toyota and Volkswagen have been working together in the UK to help automotive suppliers achieve world class supply performance. 200 UK companies have benefited from the programme organised by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd (SMMT) Industry Forum (IF). The UK Department of Trade and Industry support the programme and have committed to invest £6.5m into the IF venture.

Master Engineers, experienced production experts, teach engineers and so far 23 engineers and three on secondment from suppliers have completed their training. They train for twelve months and when the Master Engineers leave, they in turn will train new engineers in a self-sustaining process. Overcoming cultural and language barriers, Japanese Master Engineers say that they have been very impressed by the attitude of British engineers to learn as much as possible from them.

As one supplier put it “Now we – and in particular our operators – have had first-hand experience of Continuous Improvement, we are well positioned to implement the techniques we have admired in Japanese companies.”

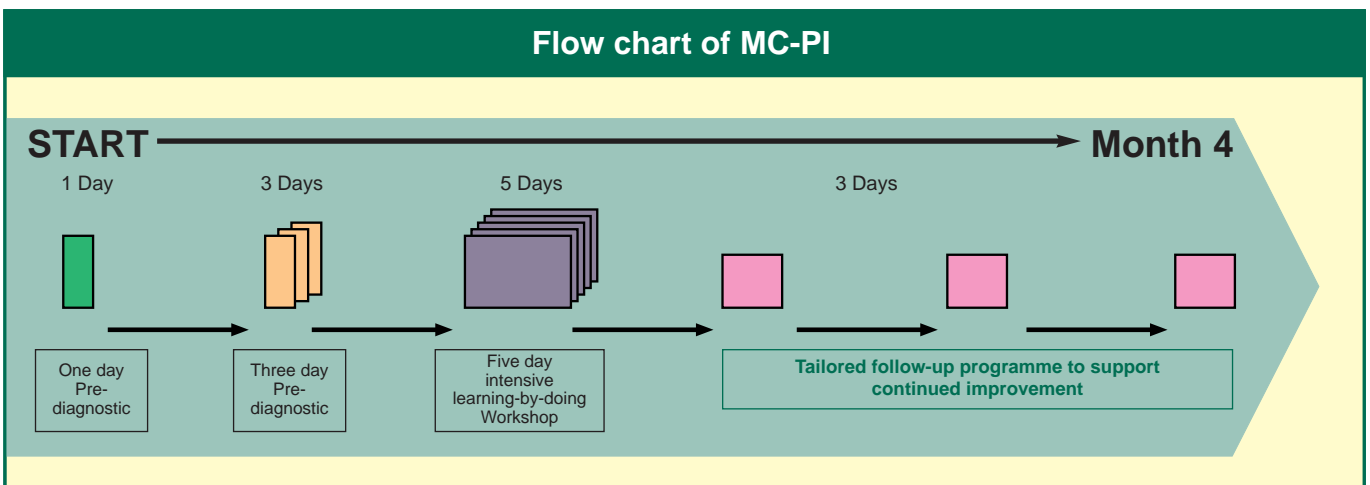
For suppliers, the IF offers three products - Master Class in Process Improvement (MC-PI), Supply Chain Group and Team Leader Training.

Absorbing the Continuous Improvement Culture

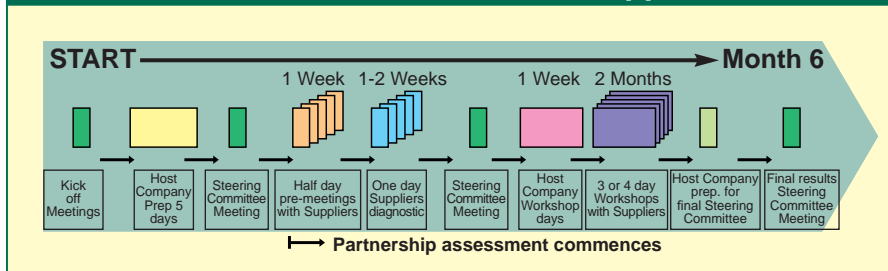
The Master Class in Process Improvement (MC-PI) is a fifteen-day experience for supplier companies and remains the best way of training IF Engineers. Activity is structured and focuses on analysing areas for improvement in the Quality, Cost and Delivery (QCD) of a suppliers operation. Improvements are measured and monitored centrally by the Industry Forum. Many companies have reaped rewards with right-first-time quality improvements up two thirds, doubling of productivity and stock turns trebled.

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Of central importance is that suppliers not only make initial improvements, but that both management and workers absorb the lessons and benefits of continuous improvement. Suppliers have commented that teamwork has been enhanced and workers “now have a structured approach to problem solving



Flow chart of structured SCG approach



– they know they can make a difference.” Others have highlighted the importance of making the cultural change. “These activities are a key part of our strategic improvement programme and are initiating a major cultural change across the factory, with staff receptive to new ideas and further improvements.”

Working with the Supply Chain

The second IF product is the Supply Chain Group Activity (SCG) and responds to the trend of increased outsourcing of product supply responsibility to major first tier suppliers, who have in turn outsourced responsibility to their suppliers. In such a pyramidal structure the final quality and cost of vehicles depends on maximising all parts of the supply chain.

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Over six months the programme aims to improve the QCD performance of each individual company throughout the Supply Chain, by eliminating waste between companies and improving the partnership relationship between the companies. Again the programme is structured, with IF engineers providing advice and importantly, a neutral voice, as companies learn to work together.

Sustaining the effort

After suppliers have learnt from Master Engineers or worked in the SCG programme, the challenge is to ensure that the culture of continuous improvement takes root. So the IF has developed a third product, the Team Leader Training package, combining practical learning-by-doing activity on the factory floor with some off-the-job training for first line managers.

Experience so far has highlighted the importance of senior management support, as they have to accept advice that improvements can be made in their companies; and for good communications which is helped by the practical “hands-on” nature of the programme. In the future, the programme will be self-sustaining with trained British engineers and it represents an excellent example of an industry and government sponsored initiative to improve the competitiveness of small and medium sized supplier companies. ■

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Master Classes are practical exercises held on the suppliers' factory floors

INTERNATIONAL RECYCLING CONFERENCE

Global automobile industry discuss recycling with industry partners

At the end of September, representatives of the automobile industry from around the world met in Stockholm to discuss car recycling in the Fifth International Car Recycling Workshop.

As the draft European car recycling law nears the final stages of the EU legislative process, delegates heard about the latest developments in national car recycling initiatives in Europe with an eye to how these systems will fit in with a future EU law. But the focus was not just on the EU, as for the first time in this forum the industry heard about the situation in other countries like Brazil, Australia and Poland.

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The auto industry did not just talk to itself as car recycling involves other industry sectors and attendees heard from the dismantling, shredding and insurance sectors, including presentations on some of the latest techniques in treating old cars and their content of metals, glass, rubber and plastics. The currently intractable problem is how to develop economically viable ways to process the non-metallic content of cars. Recycling technologies and techniques are being advanced, but a truly economic process or processes remains to be found.

The workshop was hosted by BIL, the Swedish automobile association and jointly organised by the JAMA, ACEA (EU), KAMA (Korea), USCAR (USA) and VDA (Germany) automotive associations, in close association with member companies in all of those regions. Another workshop is being planned for Spring 2001. ■

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Spreading the Message

Interview articles in magazines with safety experts; posters in train stations, highway parking areas, driving schools and dealerships; adverts in national newspapers and, for the first time, in cinemas as well, will all combine to

spread the basic message of wearing seatbelts and if you are driving a motorbike to keep your lights on during daylight to increase your visibility.

Increasing the visibility of motorcyclists

More than 80 per cent of motorcyclists keep their lights on during the day. The campaign aims to increase this rate even further and to raise the awareness of motorcyclists with pedestrians, bicyclists and other drivers. In addition, all new

motorcycles have automatic lighting systems.

Despite the growing use and number of vehicles on the road, the death toll has steadily declined with less than 10,000 annual road casualties and the government has set a target to reduce this again to less than 9,000 a year. We all hope that these types of educational publicity will lead to safer roads and safer driving conditions. ■

Essay

by Peter NUNN

Inside Job

When you buy a new car in Japan, tradition demands it must be immaculately presented down to the very last detail. Not a scratch.

Once on the road, however, things relax a bit and a degree of customising seems to take over, especially inside. You don't have to spend long on Japanese roads to see cars adorned with all kinds of accessories: aftermarket seat covers, high-powered stereos, satellite navigation sets and more. Much more.

Perhaps as a reflection of the fact that the Japanese see the inside of their cars as a kind of mobile living room (or that traffic jams are so common, they might as well get good and comfortable), a lot of the personalising that goes on seems geared towards making the car interior good and homely.

Stick-on cup holders and pen holders quickly become affixed to the dashboard. Sun screens are clipped onto side windows. Small stands to hold cellular phones sprout from the centre console. And on the rear parcel shelf of innumerable sedans, a Scottie box of tissues will be sitting up there taking pride of place. Guaranteed.

“While Japan is reputed to be the land of conformity, when it comes to car interiors, nowadays anything goes.”

Japan's choice of seat covers is nothing if not distinctive, a white flowery pattern being favourite and sometimes this covers the entire seat and even the headrest too. There are two agendas at work here. One, the covers add that homely touch. Two, they protect the seats so that when you come to sell the car, the seats should be like new, so boosting resale value.

No go-getting 20-30 year old in Japan would dream of fitting these white doily covers, however. For them, jazzy, multicoloured seats, mats, cushions and steering wheels are the way. Smoked glass is another must. Small fortunes are also spent on in-car entertainment: powerful audio, the latest sat-nav/TV unit with karaoke function, no holds barred.

On a less extreme level, the Japanese also seem to have a fondness for dolls and mascots in cars, as well as good luck charms hanging from the rearview mirror.

All of which supports the notion that while Japan is reputed to be the land of conformity, when it comes to car interiors, nowadays anything goes. ■

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