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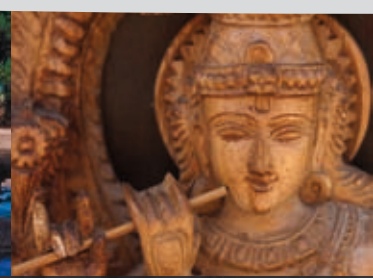
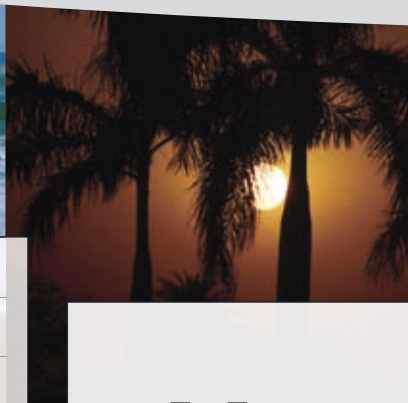
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Management training in India

If people are to succeed in working together they have to understand each other - particularly when colleagues come from different cultures. From March 1 to 3, 2007, twenty Indian and European managers from Knorr-Bremse came together in the western Indian state of Goa to find out how to communicate efficiently on trans-continental projects.



For the European participants, who included production managers from the Centers of Competence, the workshop offered a welcome opportunity to get to know the new Managing Director of Knorr-Bremse India, Sankaranarayanan Venkataraman. Elmar Kades, Senior Vice President Truck Asia Pacific, also attended to represent top management. Unfortunately one of the initiators of the event, Oskar Flach, Managing Director of Knorr-Bremse Systeme für Nutzfahrzeuge GmbH, was unable to attend on account of a bereavement. The day before the event, Sabine

Foellbach, co-initiator of the workshop and HR Development Officer, held a meeting with experienced intercultural experts Joseph Paulson and Sreemathi Ramnath, representing the European and Indian sides, in order to identify participants' expectations regarding the training workshop. Close collaboration between Human Resources and Vikram Sathe, HR manager Pune, at the planning and organization stage was also a crucial element in the event's success.



Participants in the management training session

Learning by doing

One of the best ways of developing a better understanding of what makes other people tick is to actually do things with them. When the Knorr-Bremse managers from India and Europe were divided into teams and set certain tasks to complete, it soon emerged that strategies can differ considerably according to culturally-determined patterns of behavior, values and beliefs.

Realization of this fact helped create a relaxed atmosphere based on mutual respect that was a good basis for getting down to brass tacks and discussing “real” business issues. The Indian and European managers already had experience of working together prior to the workshop but now there was an opportunity to frankly discuss past successes and unresolved issues. Complete openness was the order of the day, with everyone committed to working together for future success.

A further important step

Participants declared themselves well satisfied with the results of the workshop. A one-off event such as this is, of course, only a single element in a larger process that has been running for a year and has involved a series of separate training workshops in Munich and Pune to discuss collaboration with Knorr-Bremse India – but even this step has achieved a lot. Managers now have a different approach to communicating with one another based on personal contacts, with telephone conversations frequently replacing an exchange of emails. After all, the best way of dealing with misunderstandings is through direct discussion.

European and Indian managers are determined to co-operate more efficiently in the future and arrange further workshops, seminars and visits. It remains to be seen whether the techniques practised in the training sessions will prove their worth. Success is all about results! ■