

Investment in learning pays dividends for employee—*and Boeing*

By Kathleen Spicer

Breaking down a complex and potentially overwhelming project into bite-size, short-term pieces can help make it an easier task.

That's the advice given by Mike Kato, senior manager in Shared Services Group Frequency Management Services in Seattle, who recently earned a master's in project management through Boeing's Learning Together program. Kato currently manages Boeing's radio-frequency (RF) spectrum requirements and compliance in the United States that support company programs and operations, as well as the electromagnetics team that certifies and protects radio-frequency "shielded" rooms used for testing RF-radiating equipment, including avionics testing.

"I decided that I needed more 'tools in my toolbox,'" said Kato, who started taking courses toward the degree on weekends in October 2006. "I'd always wanted to go back to school and the timing was right. Boeing made it easy—there's

no out-of-pocket expense. Not taking advantage of this program is like leaving money on the table."

Kato joined Boeing in 1998 as a first-line manager in SSG's Abatement Services organization. He'd been project managing informally—most recently for the implementation of a new radio system—but when he looked into Boeing's Future Skills Web site (http://ssg.boeing.com/future_skills on the Boeing intranet) it inspired him to reach further.

"I noticed that project management is one of the critical skills that Boeing will need in the future and I wanted to gain this credential to help direct my career path more thoughtfully," Kato said.

What Kato learned in the program has also benefited the SSG Site Services organization.

Before developing his thesis proposal, Kato chatted with Site Services Vice President Larry Edwards to obtain guidance on where to most beneficially invest his time. Kato soon was on a team that reviewed a facilities project with an underdeveloped budget and requirements. Kato began to apply his research to the project and helped put in place the Project Development Rating Index (PDRI) tool.

The PDRI is an industry tool used by many large companies at the onset of a project to clearly determine requirements in terms of scope, environment, cost and schedule. Its premise: The more tightly defined a project is upfront, the more successful it will be.

"After the first project, we conducted additional pilots using PDRI for a paint hanger project in Renton and for a waste treatment plant project in Auburn, Wash. We then surveyed the results to see if the tool was valuable," Kato said.

In synch with his research, the tool indicated substantial process and schedule developments and improved cost savings.

"Using PDRI for major Facilities projects has resulted in fewer change orders, better time management, increased cost savings and improved customer satisfaction," said Chuck Lynch, SSG Enterprise Project Office. "Thanks to Mike, the PDRI is now a best practice on our major construction projects." ■

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PHOTO: Mike Kato in Frequency Management Services applied a project-managing tool he researched and learned about while taking courses through the Learning Together program.

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