

How to compose study tour for training <Part 2>

Procedure and points to be considered for composing a study tour

The second issue in this series describes the procedure and points to be considered for composing a study tour.

(1) Specify the purpose of the study tour

First of all, it is important to clarify what to learn. The proportion, number of participants and role of study tours are different in each training program. But in any training program, a study tour is one of the substantial elements to achieve the purpose of the training. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what kind of role and purpose should be given to the study tour. It is particularly important for short-term training where the proportion of time given to study tours is relatively large. In addition to covering the purpose of the training, attention should also be paid to the interests of the participants.

(2) Decide the destination to visit in the study tour

Geographical conditions are to be carefully considered in deciding the tour destination, so as to visit multiple destinations efficiently covering the purpose of the training comprehensively. The season to visit must also be considered in case a certain crop is the target. Depending on conditions, the observing area will be decided first, and then contents of the training will be considered to be covered there.

(3) Decide on points of interest in the destinations

For example, suppose you are going to visit a production area to learn about a certain crop. The place to visit will vary depending on the purpose; if you learn about farming and cultivation in practice, you will visit farmers; similarly, a research station for basic cultivation techniques, an extension center for technical support and dissemination, and an agricultural cooperative for marketing and formation of a production area. In addition, the timing of the visits is also the important factor. Because of the schedule of whole training program, you may not be able to visit the site at the intended cultivation stage, and in case of the busy season the visit could obstruct the daily routine of the destination. However, if you visit the site in off-season, the impact of the visit could be less than you expect.

It is possible to visit multiple destinations and learn various things in a study tour, but it would not be a good way to show them independently without explaining the relationship between each of them. In order to encourage understanding on the part of the participants, it is necessary to strategically combine different destinations so that the participants will be able to compare various cases and/or find out the relationships between them.

(4) Determine the itinerary of the study tour

The tour itinerary should be prepared so as to visit the destinations efficiently and easily, since a tour is always accompanied with movement. It is also important to ensure schedules do not become

overcrowded at the same time. It will be effective to visit one place in half a day, to enhance understanding of the participants, unless destinations are highly related to each other, such as farmers and an agricultural cooperative. In addition, enough time should be given for questions and answers, because a study tour is limited opportunity to hear the voices of the sites directly. And from this point of view too, overcrowding the schedule should be avoided.

(5) Make an appointment with the destinations

When making an appointment for the visit, firstly the purpose of the study tour and expected contents to be learned need to be clearly explained. In addition, outline of the training course and background of the participants will also be described so that the recipient organization can host the visit in the best manner. Without having this kind of adjustment, the result may not get the intended knowledge or forcing an excessive burden on the hosts, even if an interesting observation destination has been selected. Before making an appointment and explaining the details by telephone, it is effective to send a simple document by FAX or e-mail. Those hosts which have established a relationship of trust for many years can be treasures in composing a high-quality study tour.

(6) Prepare materials for the study tour

Only limited organizations/visiting destinations in Japan prepare English materials. Printed matter is valuable teaching material which deepens understanding of the participants. It is useful to cover detailed information which cannot be conveyed during the tour, and one of the best tools to review what the participants learned later. Therefore, it is necessary to confirm the availability of materials in advance and translate them into English as much as possible, which will increase the level of understanding and satisfaction of the participants.

(7) Advance preparation of the study tour

The participants themselves should understand outline of the destination and purpose of the visit in advance, which is more important than that the host understands the participants. It is essential to read through related materials, and figure out overview of the visiting destination, purpose of the visit and points to be studied, which is useful to acquire necessary knowledge and information efficiently in a limited time. It is not too much to say that advance preparation for a study tour will assure more than half of the success of the tour. In order to compose a high-quality study tour, it is essential to clarify the purpose of the tour, and prepare it very carefully from the perspectives of both the participants and the hosts.



Participants prepare for the visit of the day before departure at a hotel lobby.