

Theme Story

“With no training, there is no change.” The Innovation DNA, Turning Risks Into Opportunities

Chun Jong-soo, CEO of Gwangyang Tech



Since its establishment in 2000, Gwangyang Tech has overcome crises not with technology or capital, but through the growth of its people. In its early days, the company faced countless trials due to technical limitations, but the driving force that allowed it to endure was none other than education. CEO Chun Jong-soo refined his own thinking by copying a page of a management book every day and actively utilizing various training programs offered by HRDK. For him, innovation is not about systems but about people’s transformation, and competitiveness stems not from equipment or technology, but from human potential. This belief ultimately led him to win the Korean President’s Award for Merit in Job Competency Development in the 2025 “Month of Job Competency” event.

Gwangyang Tech operates as a comprehensive construction machinery maintenance company, inspecting and repairing heavy equipment on construction sites as one would diagnose a patient, ensuring machinery operates safely and reliably. Over the past two decades, the company has accumulated extensive field experience and technical expertise, becoming a strong pillar for the local industry. Yet, as a so-called “3D sector” business — difficult, dirty, and dangerous—workforce shortages have stuck out like a sore thumb. Driven by the conviction that “people must change for the company to change,” CEO Chun Jong-soo invested in employee education and innovation.



The company introduced QSS (Quick Six Sigma) activities, a systematic approach that emphasizes organization, cleaning, hygiene, and habitual practice. As a result, previously disordered workspaces became organized, productivity improved, and workplace accidents were significantly reduced. Today, the factory is so clean that not a single cigarette butt can be found, and the employees themselves uphold a culture of cleanliness and safety. Guided by the belief that small actions lead to big changes, Gwangyang Tech continues to learn, correct, and grow every day.

Please introduce us to the innovation activities at Gwangyang Tech.

When we first started our innovation initiatives, we implemented the “3-Geunine (Genuine Quality, Genuine Quantity, Genuine Location)” and “5S (Sort, Set in order, Shine, Sanitize, Standardize)” practices. At the time, we couldn’t get the employees to follow these basic rules properly. However, by correcting the simplest things first, the company gradually began to change. Initially, employees often said, “there is not enough time and people”, expressing reluctance to make changes. Because of high workloads, there was a lack of communication as well. The mindset of the people was the most important factor that needed to change. No matter how much I pushed the slogans, innovation could never happen if employees’ hearts weren’t on board. That’s why I spent most of my time working to shift their thinking. Once that mindset came together, real change began. Today, the workplace looks noticeably different. Where the shop floor was once cluttered and disorganized, it is now neatly arranged, and even the machining processes have been transformed. Tools that were once thrown in random places and hard to find are now stored in open-storage systems, so that anyone can walk up and immediately get what they need. As a result, work efficiency has improved, and accident risks have been significantly reduced.

What outcomes have these innovation activities produced?

Both safety indicators and productivity have improved remarkably. In 2018, productivity per person was only 11.3 million won per month, but by 2024, it had nearly doubled to 23.1 million won per month.

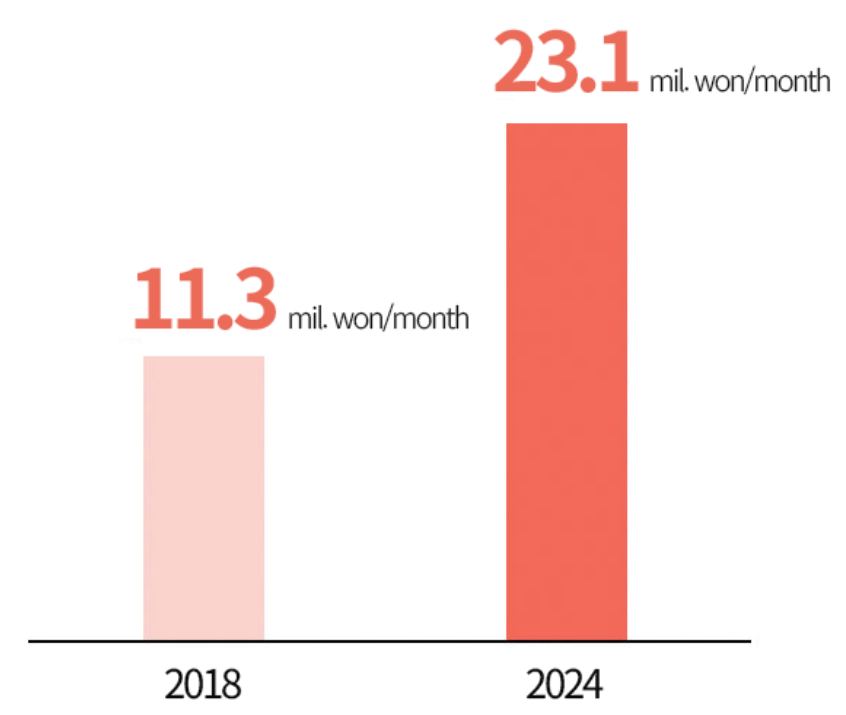
Most importantly, education has been at the heart of these innovation efforts. Thanks to consistent effort, in September 2024, our company was recognized as an Outstanding Human Resource Development Organization with certifications from four government ministries. Based on our achievement, our company also had the honor to win the Korean President’s Award for Merits in Job Competency Development in 2025. This award was not for me personally, but for the company under the name Gwangyang Tech, and I take it as a challenge and motivation to do even better moving forward.



“2025 Month of Job Competency”
Korean President’s Award for Merit
in Job Competency Development
Gwangyang Tech

Ministry of Employment and Labor | HRDK

Enhanced Productivity Per Employee



It seems you actively utilized various HRDK programs as well.

First, through the “Employer-Led Vocational Competency Training”, we systematically raised the technical skills of our on-site workforce. We also introduced Structured On-the-Job Training (S-OJT), creating a framework where skilled employees directly train their juniors. This top-down approach cultivated a culture of learning in which experience becomes knowledge, and knowledge leads to new experience throughout the company. Since 2023, we’ve implemented the Work-Learning Parallel System, allowing employees to learn on the job. This approach has greatly improved on-site responsiveness and productivity, while also strengthening the foundation for nurturing talent.

All of these initiatives were carried out with support from HRDK’s “Competency Development Dedicated Doctor” program at the Jeonnam branch. In particular, Gwangyang Tech’s active participation in HRDK’s job competency programs has achieved results notable enough to serve as a benchmark for other business leaders. Moving forward, we aim to harness our experience to promote HRDK’s job competency development project and serve as the hub between programs and other companies in our region. As a token of our gratitude for all the assistance and support we’ve received from HRDK, we will spread success cases applicable to local companies and lead the way in promoting the program with pride.

What areas do you focus on to encourage employees to develop their skills proactively and grow with the company?

In 2012, during the company’s toughest period, I first wrote the phrase “Turn Crisis into Opportunity” in a notebook. From that day on, I began recording one page a day, taking notes from corporate management books and case studies. Now, it’s already the 21st volume, and this record is no longer a personal diary. I’m not the only one writing it, as employees read it, sign it, and share their thoughts to create a learning space together. This activity allows them to naturally absorb our management philosophy and recognize the importance of their own growth.

Gwangyang Tech’s Achievements After Job Competency Development Program

<p>Safety (negligence)</p> <p>2018 2024</p> <p>5 case > 0 case</p>	<p>Productivity (revenue per employee)</p> <p>2018 2024</p> <p>KRW 11.3 mil. > KRW 23.1 mil.</p>
<p>Environment (air pollution/waste water)</p> <p>2018 2024</p> <p>1 case > 0 case</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction (claims)</p> <p>2018 2024</p> <p>4 case > 0 case</p>



Are there any training programs you plan to pursue in the future?

We plan to strengthen “Level-Up Training”, designed to elevate employees’ skills to the next level. At Gwangyang Tech, we have several specialized fields, such as welding, machine processing, and painting. Like the different departments in a hospital, each area requires slightly different technical skills. Although the limited staff presents challenges in providing field-specific training, we plan to offer personalized training for each employee to enhance their proficiency and ultimately leverage their expertise as a competitive advantage at Gwangyang Tech.

Another initiative is the introduction of collaborative robots. We want to build a system where humans and robots work together, which also connects to smart factory concepts. This industry involves physically demanding and messy work, making it difficult to attract younger talent. Currently, employees over 70 years old continue working even after retirement. In the end, robots will handle simple, physically demanding tasks, while humans focus on precision and skilled work. This structure is essential for sustainable growth. Although collaborative robots haven’t been fully implemented yet, we’re taking small, proactive steps to apply them gradually and stay ahead.