Teamwork Breeds Efficiency, Efficiency Will Prevail

By Amanda McGowan

Efficiency. Whether it's energy, cost, time, I think we can all agree efficiency is crucial to success in the processing industry. As I think about all the forms of efficiency on the minds of processing plant engineers and managers, it gets me thinking: What about workplace efficiency?

Especially in these rather trying economic times, a plant cannot afford to make mistakes. Mistakes will only hinder time, cost and energy savings vital to a plant's success. It takes a good team to avoid mistakes. One lone process engineer or manager cannot do it themselves. Without an efficient and reliable team, the plant will plunder.

In a recent column [1], I revealed I have a hidden talent for recognizing some of my colleagues footsteps as they enter the office every morning. (OK, maybe it's not so much a talent as it is a result of spending a few months in a cubicle very near the office door.)

I have found everyone has their own pace. A lollygagging gentleman struts in nice and slow, while a woman scurries in so quickly the pace is more of a light jog. The recognizable stomping of the heels or flip-flopping of the sandals in the summer helps me to identify who might be walking in.

My conclusion as to why I can recognize the footsteps is because I rely on my coworkers to help me do my job better.

During a time of economic turmoil in which plants are shutting down or cutting hundreds of jobs, it can be hard to admit you need your coworkers to do your job better. In a time of cutbacks, it's probably pretty compelling to act, and feel, like you don't need the guy next to you. If somebody has to go, better him than you, right?

I'm not saying we shouldn't look out for our own job security, but the fact of the matter is most work environments need a team to run efficiently, and get things done quickly and correctly. Especially in the processing industry, an inefficient plant simply won't succeed, and then everyone would be out of a job.

The key to an efficient team is the right mix of characters, the right personalities that strike a balance and ultimately optimize processes.

You're the manager and behind in the day. You need things done quickly. You turn to the fast-acting engineer with a rapid work pace. However, while he or she flies

through the task, small but detrimental details are easily overlooked. In comes the slower, detail-oriented engineer to catch those errors.

The entire team reaches the finish line in a timely, error-free manner thanks to the work of two, rather opposite, engineers, and the plant manager can finally breathe easy. Thus, you have an efficient process as a result of a team made up of different characters, personalities and paces.

In a time when not many workers truly feel secure about their employment status, it's easy to forget the necessity of a team and what individual differences can contribute. But at the core, teamwork breeds efficiency, and in times like these, efficiency will prevail.

What's your opinion? Let me know-send me an e-mail via amanda.mcgowan@advantagemedia.com [2].

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