

## And The iPod Shall Lead Us

By Jeff Reinke

It's hard to believe, but according to a [recent post](#) [1] on *BusinessWeek's* Web site, an Apple a day could help keep the unemployment numbers away. Per blogger Michael Mandel, the Apple iPod has created 13,920 engineering and retail jobs worth a combined total of \$753 million in the U.S.

At a time when peace on earth can be used to describe the inactivity of more and more factories, and workers, it's refreshing to see news focused on economic stimulus. More so, it offers perspective on how processing plants can better weather current marketplace conditions.

Apple invested a tremendous amount of time, money and personnel in developing the iPod, and as a result, has reaped tremendous benefits from being a product innovator. The company saw an opportunity in the market and allocated the resources necessary to be a pioneer in the portable music offerings biz.

The payoff for its vision has produced a brand on par with Kleenex, Xerox and Q-Tip, in which any entire product category is described by a single brand name. You don't buy an MP3 player anymore; you get an iPod-even if you actually purchase a lower-priced unit in the same category.

We in processing have similar opportunities on a number of fronts, such as:

- New feedstocks for energy production.
- The development of new processing technologies that either eliminate waste or accommodate its collection for use as an energy source.
- New equipment that helps streamline production with efficiency gains and more accurate operating mechanisms.
- Lean manufacturing methodologies that, while sometimes difficult to initially implement, keep U.S. plants more globally competitive.

The common thread between these types of initiatives and the success of the iPod is that in order for the ultimate end-result to be realized, our industry needs to place a couple more items on our holiday gift list. First, let's ask for the vision to focus on long-term results while staring into an

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Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

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uncertain future. Like running into an unfamiliar room with the lights off, it can be scary to put that much faith in something you can't actually see at the current time.

Secondly, let's seek determination in seeing these new initiatives through to the end. It would be easy to turn from this path in tougher economic times, but staying the course would produce a return on these investments via greater efficiency-based gains and overall cost controls.

Finally, we will need courage to initiate these programs and drive them with a focus on continuous improvement. This means a dedication to doing things the right way and not cutting corners. Perhaps our mantra for 2009 should mirror that of the crest I wore during my time in the Army-Fortes Fortuna Juvat. Translated, this means Fortune Favors the Brave.

What's your take? Feel free to send me an e-mail at [jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com](mailto:jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com) [2].

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