Know Your Role

Yeah, I'll admit it. I definitely remember the actor better known today as Dwayne Johnson when he was the trash-talking, elbow-dropping wrestling character known as The Rock. Although there were a number of characteristics for which The Rock became famous, perhaps his best known is a catch phrase. Delivered after ridiculing his opponent and opponent's family, the venue, the fans, etc., he told the individual(s) in question to simply: "Know your role."

I flashed back to The Great One after recently reading some information from project management consultant ESI Intl. One of its "Top 10 Project Management Trends for 2009" described a middle manager's emerging role in instituting and driving organizational and operational changes. To quote the release, "Today's economy will force organizations to confront the important roles middle managers play in the success of change efforts. Middle managers' roles will shift from simple messenger of directives ‘from above' to creating a positive environment to enable change, accountability and ownership of change initiatives …"

My take is that there will be greater expectations of supervisors throughout operations, and more will be expected of them in order to help guide organizations like processing plants through these unique economic times.

According to the 2009 Processing Outlook Report (which can be found under the Processing Profiles header at www.chem.info) Chem.Info recently published, spending and overall investment at processing plants around the country and throughout a wide range of sectors will decrease in 2009. So with spending cut, more focus will no doubt be placed on leaner operational approaches. This will place the facility's work force and those managing it securely within corporate crosshairs.

To some, this signifies added pressure and stress. Now, in addition to core responsibilities, they will be scrutinized to help ensure corporate goals are met and maintained. They'll also have to perform these functions knowing that their success or failure will play a key role in areas like work-force downsizing. To others, it's an opportunity. Understanding that they will be under greater surveillance to integrate changes and make a difference in operational performance, this group of managers will embrace the impact that they can have as a true agent of change.

Greater attention to their duties, responsibilities and results will shed light on their dedication and discipline to improvement. In the end, they'll know their role better than anyone and will have proven themselves to be an even more valuable resource. Essentially, they'll have secured their position, as well as those of the people reporting to them. Today's processing marketplace is potentially more results-driven than at any other time in our recent history. The difference between those who survive it and those who thrive in it will correlate to how well they know and embrace their new roles.

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