Processing The Madness

By Jeff Reinke

There's no doubt as to what is on everyone's minds right now. You can hardly turn on the news or read a Web site headline without some mention of it, and rightfully so, as it is the novel topic of the day. Based on the things that were said and done during his campaign and throughout his first 50+ days on the job, and the historical implications of recent decisions, it would certainly be difficult to imagine it not being a primary element of President Obama's daily status reports.

So whether it's this combination of media peer pressure and timeliness, or simply because it has such a far-reaching impact on all our lives, I find myself compelled to talk about it as well. Obviously, the 800-pound gorilla on everyone's mind right now is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Tournament, and more specifically, how could my Wisconsin Badgers be given a 12 seed?

OK, so maybe there are bigger issues dominating the news right now. However, in filling out my selections for the NCAA Tournament this week, I saw some parallels between success in the brackets and handling situations that might arise at your processing plant. So here are my Final Four as it relates to both March Madness and your processing operations-whichever might take greater precedence over the next couple of weeks.

1. *Be original.*

What everyone else is doing might not be right for you. Don't be afraid to mix things up and try different combinations in developing your unique operational perspective. Standing out from the crowd provides you with a different vantage point, and can inspire new and creative ideas with the potential for more positive results further down the road. In order to get there, however, you might have to take some risks.

2. *Be consistent.*

Don't second-guess your instincts in developing and executing a plan. Hindsight is and always will be 20/20, but the rewards for the truly innovative are much greater and sweeter. Also, once the plan is in place, stay true to it unless it becomes an obvious failure. Inconsistent functionality only results in inconsistent and limited results.

3. *Match-ups are key.*

When looking at how people function, don't be afraid to let personality enter into the equation. How different groups or individuals interact with each other, and in unique situations, should play a role in who goes where. This decision can be based

on location, skill sets, team chemistry, or your own observations and gut feelings based on experience and training.

4. *Steal with pride.*

Although this might seem to contradict the first concept, part of being unique can include using different elements of plans that have been successful for others. The key is not only to cut and paste these outside thoughts and actions, but also put your own independent spin on the lessons learned and best practices extracted. You can make them yours by applying the data that you already use in making key decisions.

What's your opinion? I'd love to hear it-please feel free to contact me at jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com [1].

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