

Lead, Don't Follow

By Jeff Reinke, Editorial Director

In attending the Pack & Process Expo shows, respectively, last week, a couple of key market dynamics became very obvious to me. The first is that true market leaders are very impatient. They don't wait for regulations or legislation. They don't wait for new standards. They don't wait on customer demands in order to innovate.

They were green before green was more than the focus of Kermit's musical diatribe.

They were energy efficient before the national grid was more than an analogy for a football field.

And they're not afraid to tell customers what they want.

You didn't read that incorrectly, nor was it a typo. Leading suppliers to the processing industry, on a regular basis, tell those to whom they sell what they're going to sell them. Instead of just listening to the demands of their processing customers, leading suppliers are anticipating and working to match what a customer wants in advance. They don't fill a need — they create it.

This isn't marketing magic or questionable business tactics. Rather, this is what it takes to compete on a global basis. While a number of the booths offered the next generation of a current product, those that truly stood out were the select few that were investing in research and development during these tougher economic times in order to offer new and innovative products that will help processors run more efficiently and compete on the world stage.

It's a lesson that can hopefully resonate throughout the industry, and not just in the products your company produces, but in the processes that are implemented to manufacture and distribute them as efficiently and effectively as possible.

In a recent issue of Chem.Info, we profiled a chemical plant that had put contingency plans in place that exceeded all regulatory requirements. The end result was a much smoother recovery effort after a chemical explosion ravaged [their operation](#) [1]. In the next issue, we'll profile a processor that has implemented a number of sustainability measures that exceed most facility's energy cost control targets, but these steps were taken as a way of demonstrating a focus on continuous improvement.

These processors are out ahead of the curve and as a result continue to perform at a very high level. Those innovative exhibitors at the show were crowded by

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attendees. While the cliché of lead, follow or get out of the way may provide some sage advice to many, mine would simply be to not worry about the latter two. If you lead, some will follow but most will simply get out of your way.

Are you a market leader? Send me an e-mail at jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com [2].

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