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Cross pollination inside the fence

By Paperitalo Staff

If you work on a mill site, this column is for you.

Can you name the last time you walked through all the departments in the mill (other than the one you work in?). Do not give me excuses, e.g., I am too busy, they do not want visitors and so forth. You can do it if you want to and you know it.

We often talk about cross-pollination with other industries but maybe we should first start with pollen sharing at home. I am amazed when I go in mills, especially larger ones, and find insular departments. They do not call it an energy island for nothing. If you are not assigned there, the conventional wisdom is you do not go there.

Some would say that such matters are adequately covered in the production meeting, but I do not buy it. If you are in the powerhouse, take a couple of hours one afternoon, stroll over to the pulp mill control room, and engage them in a conversation. Ask them what you do in power that drives them crazy. Ask them where their operational sweet spot is and what has to happen in power in order to make that happen.

If you are in the paper mill, stroll over to power with a similar intent. Ask them what a machine break does to the power island. On a planned startup after a maintenance day, what would help them conserve energy?

Spend some unstructured time talking about your common problems and goals.

If you are in engineering, you have no excuse for not wandering all over the mill. I used to do this when I had weekend duty. Walk around, talk to the shift operators, and see what works for them and what is a

problem. Strive to make the mill work more smoothly (I am talking technically, although there should be management benefits, too) by understanding all the pieces.

Make incestuous cross-pollination your goal. Do it often--at least an afternoon a month. You will be amazed what it does for operational efficiency.

You might be a slovenly bureaucrat if--you give no thought and have no guilt to receiving or making non-emergency (and by emergency I mean blood dripping from the stump where the hand used to be) personal phone calls while at work.

For ethics this week, consider office politics. A mild case can be made for actively participating in office politics that may result in advancing the goals of the organization. As far as office politics advancing your career--bad, bad stuff. We will talk next week. ##