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## **Generals**

By Paperitalo Staff

Last week, we talked about your role. This week I want to talk about Generals.

In business, we seldom use the word general in describing one's role, except in the context of "general manager."

However, no matter how big or small your area of responsibility, I wish to suggest you are the "General" over that area, not unlike the use of the same term in the military.

But what does this mean? If I mention General Eisenhower, General Foch, General de Gaulle, and so forth, I suspect you have an immediate and automatic opinion that comes into your mind. But let us look at the word "generalist" for a minute. You no doubt have a different image of a "generalist" than you do of the "Generals" that I previously mentioned.

Yet, these two words are very closely related. We think of a "general" in the military sense as one possessing authority and power, able to get things done. These are all true. But "generals" must be and are also "generalists." In other words, besides authority and power, they have been around long enough to know a little bit about everything that goes on in the entire area they command, be it internal to their command or external. It is not by accident that "general" and "generalist" come from the same root.

Now let us substitute "mill manager" for "general." I think we can agree that a mill manager functions in much the same way as a military general does. In other words they have the responsibility and authority for everything in their command, internal and external. This brings us to the point for this week-seldom does one see a mill manager operating as a true generalist. Mill managers tend to get in the same rut as everyone else and focus on the same things each day-a mistake.

A few months ago in this column, I mentioned the necessity to get out and roam around your mill site-to discover what is there that can bite you. I mentioned a site where I had been that had open pits of water with no barriers to prevent one from falling in. This is just one example of where a mill manager can fail in their "generalists" responsibilities. There are many others, errors of commission and omission. The point is a mill manager in a rut is a mill manager in trouble.

Either they are not using their expertise to seize all the opportunities available or they are being negligent and exposing their area to unnecessary liabilities.

If you are a mill manager, can you proudly and successfully say you are an excellent generalist, too?

Safety involves a generalist aspect as well. Some accidents, when dissected, reveal a glaring lack of understanding of the big picture. Certain details were carefully considered, but, on the whole a vital item was missed. The famous Tacoma Narrows bridge disaster is a very public example of this sort of accident. Be safe, be a good generalist and we will talk next week. ##