



onlyPulpandPaperJobs.com

Pulling Together

By Paperitalo Staff

One of the biggest challenges to effectively operating any large facility is keeping the employees engaged. In pulp and paper mills, I can usually determine fairly quickly if they are successful (but not the degree of success) or not if you allow me to watch the top executive on the site for less than a day. Note: I am talking about the top executive in charge of production, at a site where headquarters also is sited, I am not talking about the CEO or equivalent.

It is quite simple: do they know their facility and do they know the people? If the top person on the site is engaged with the workforce, spending as much of their day as possible with them, out amongst the operations, it is highly likely they are running a facility that is either successful or on its way to being successful. A top manager on a site that spends the day in their office poring over spreadsheets or on the phone is leading their team down the path of destruction.

Same goes for department managers, too. They need to be out in their departments daily, talking to the people, observing operations, fully current on current conditions.

The ones who impress me the most are the ones who know their numbers for the last twenty-four hours when they hit the site. Perhaps they stop at their office to drop off something and pick up their PPE, but then, flashlight in hand, they are out in the operation. The ones at the top of the list do this at morning shift change, so over a period of a few days, they see everyone coming off third and going on to first. Then, later in the day, before they go home, another tour to talk to second shift.

Managing a pulp and paper mill is not a behind the desk job. Especially today, when information is available anywhere you are. There is really nothing in your office that is necessary or not available almost anywhere in the mill.

Granted, the top person has to field queries from headquarters and from customers, but if their facility is operating optimally, those queries are few and far between. And it is operating optimally because they are out in touch with what is going on.

Even in the old days, before all the modern data systems, astute managers operated the same way. A mill that reported to me long ago did it this way. The operations manager had a strip recorder in his office that recorded the speed of the last idler roll before the calendar. He went to his office every morning, pulled out the strip, looked at it quickly, and headed to the

machine. Of course, if they had been down over thirty minutes during the night, he already had been called about that.

Simply, a successful mill requires all to be engaged. If the person at the top is not engaged as described above, there is no hope that anyone else is. Sooner or later, the facility will fail, if headquarters does not replace that person first.

So, top production manager, when was the last time you were on your roofs? When was the last time you saw the back fence of the area for which you are responsible? These journeys in and of themselves will not make more production, but they do indicate how engaged you are.

For safety this week, we all know safety involves being engaged. Stress it every day.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##