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History repeats itself

By Paperitalo Staff

We have talked about the subject of this week's column before.

Suppose you went into a hospital or a doctor's office, only to find the walls covered with medical profession artifacts from long ago? Would it make you comfortable to see an amputation saw from the 1860s hanging on the wall? How about a tobacco smoke enema apparatus? They had such things, you know. You notice dust balls the size of tumbleweeds in the corner. When called into the inner sanctum, the doctor greets you in a blood-stained lab coat, obviously worn for several days. If you dare stay, she finally writes some orders for you. You notice the name on the top of the order sheet is not the same one as on the current practice marquee. You inquire about this and she says, "Oh yeah, we changed our name four years ago but haven't run out of the old forms yet."

How do you feel about this doctor? Would you go back to this doctor or hospital?

THEN WHY IN THE H E DOUBLE TOOTHPICKS (to quote Radar O'Reilly from "M*A*S*H") DO YOU TOLERATE SUCH CONDITIONS IN YOUR MILL????

You are not (this is the "repeat" part of the title) running a museum. You are supposed to be operating a state-of-the-art, highly efficient, highly controlled manufacturing process.

Every employee comes to work in your facility, consciously or unconsciously, ready to mimic the culture of your mill (there are a few outliers, but most of you find ways to fire the non-compliant). They mirror what they see.

If conditions are sloppy and disorganized, your fellow employees think it is OK to be sloppy and disorganized. If you look like you just changed the oil in your '57 Chevy lying on your back in a cow barn that has not been mucked out in five years, so will they.

I can't prove it, but I strongly feel in the worst mills I have seen with the attributes described here, it is costing them 3-5% in uptime. Not running a professionally looking and staffed mill costs you money.

Now, if your mill happens to be housed in fifty year old or older facilities, do not be discouraged. I am not suggesting pulling down buildings and putting up new ones. However, the contents of the buildings, including the people, have no excuse for not being ship-shape.

Attitude plays out in quality, uptime, maintenance and expectations. A strong component of attitude is our surroundings.

I know I have harped on this before. Yet every time I hear of or see another struggling mill that should not be, i.e., they are in great grades with good profit margins, it drives me crazy. Obviously, that happened again this week.

The answers are right in front of you, take little overtime and no capital. Look around, are you working in a facility that meets the standards you would expect in a doctor's office? Why not? What are you going to do about them?

For safety this week, you can avoid some of the visits to the emergency room by doing what I suggest above.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##