

Clarity and Consequences

By Paperitalo Staff

Why does life seem to speed up as we get older? Several of my contemporaries and I mention this often as we live in our seventh decade. No matter your age, however, I am sure you are experiencing this.

One of the old theories on this subject has to do with your frame of reference. For instance, if you are fifty, each day is 0.0055% of your life. When you were five, each day was 0.055% of your life--ten times more important.

As I have thought about this, however, I have decided there is something else at work here as well. It is called experience.

In a number of venues, I have mentioned my experience teaching teenagers how to drive. My observations were as follows: when first behind the wheel, a teenager looks at everything--mirrors, speedometer, levers, steering wheel, and so forth. Their eyes dart from place to place as they try to take it all in. Soon, however, they automatically determine what the important data is and drop the rest.

I think we do this in life, too. One reason things seem to speed up is because we are not looking as hard at all the things around us as we did when we were younger. We have more mental free time in our daily routine, hence each day does not seem so full.

Think about when you first started working in the facility where you are now. You took in everything, from the parking lot to your workspace. Then, the same as you made excursions out from your workspace. I can remember significant details from my first day on every job I have ever had. But I can remember almost nothing about the last day.

So why are we dealing with this touchy-feely subject here? Because it has both good and bad aspects for advancing the company for which you work (and your own career). Ever been subjected to the "We tried that before and it doesn't work" comment? It fits here. People become comfortable with the way they are doing things and do not want to change or revert to the day

where they were exerting a significant effort to get things done. They like the routine. They are comfortable.

I was having lunch the other day with a prospective advertiser for our publications here. This person was telling me how much trouble they have selling at the mill level. They have a product with a payout of about 4 weeks. Everywhere they have installed it, this has worked and they have a long reference list. Yet, when they talk to department managers, there is no interest, for they perceive they may have to work a little harder, take a little risk in order to get through the ramp up stage. Such managers obviously "know how to drive the car" and see no personal upside in doing anything other than the status quo. Of course, the answer here is to get to the bean counters, which we can do for them, too.

Many of you are unlike the managers in the above example, however. You know the future success of your mill depends on you. So, here is what we want you to do for our quiz this week. Get up from your workspace. Walk at least fifty steps. Look around. Find something you have not noticed before.

For safety this week, training and routine are necessary, but being ready for the unexpected is just as important. How can you convey this in your monthly safety meetings?

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##