



Assembling a rubber band or applying Band-Aids™

Here we are again, downsizing and right sizing our business organizations so we can remain competitive. The theme is to do more with less. When it comes to projects like turnarounds that means staffing up during peak workload demands through the preparation and execution phases.

Staffing up during a turnaround involves hiring contractors with the skills necessary to execute the scope of work. Today, most of the U.S. refineries do not maintain an in-house work force of the capacity to execute a turnaround or shutdown of any size. Instead, they hire the appropriate contractors to supplement their in-house skilled labor. That also means increasing the refinery's in-house management staff.

Look in, look out

So, from where do we draw this beefed up turnaround-dedicated management team? We look to both internal and external resources. We borrow from the plant's functional departments (those with similar disciplines or specialized skills such as engineering, planning, estimating, scheduling, etc.). We supplement

this core team with similarly disciplined contract personnel.

The contract people work as an extension of our in-house team only when we need them providing us a lean and competitive tour de force. We assemble internal and contract folks within a matrix organizational model that is hierarchical in nature and is designed to better balance time, cost, performance and stress issues. It is a business model that has stood the test of time — unless we assemble the wrong people.

Assembling a group of people to work on the same project together does not make a team. So, how do we make a matrix organization comprised of a just-in-time work force that use their knowledge and experience together as an effective team? Taking a systemic approach and defining organizational strategy prior to recruiting people is the keystone. If we build the team around the specific people or talent we want on the team, we will build a very people dependent organization. However, if we build the organization around our turnaround systems, we are systems dependent and not people dependent.

Keep the know how

People come and go, and when they go we don't want part of the "know how" to leave with them. If the organization is systems based we can easily replace people with the other qualified people and teach them the system.

This is not rocket science. With the keystone in hand, we start identifying and staffing or hiring the skills and experience necessary to operate the turnaround systems and to be an accountable organization.

Having a process for screening and filling the positions on your turnaround team is pivotal to success. As always, we should consider all options at our disposal in-house before going outside to fill the positions on the matrix organizational chart.

That being said, first and foremost we need to assemble a team that can work together and have the core competencies to work within the system. They must also be accountable. By accountable I mean they simply must have the "willingness to accept responsibility for results or outcome." The purpose of the organizational strategy is to define the roles

and responsibilities of the team and each member of the team.

If we want them to be accountable we must begin by telling them what they are expected to achieve and in what time frame. We must define the tools and systems they will be using and what the chain of command will be. We cannot make turnarounds predictable events by being vague. We have to create a pucker factor.

Being a team means working toward the common good, which is the strategic objective of the turnaround. The organizational strategy is the tool we use to create alignment, specificity of performance and consequences that will make us an accountable organization that can move down the road in lock step with a highly synergetic just-in-time work force — a force that is as flexible as a rubber band rather than a band of dysfunctional brothers requiring multiple Band-Aids™.

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