



Mentoring for the future

The importance of mentoring in today's fast-paced professional world recalls the power of its origin in Ancient Greece, where Aristotle famously instructed Alexander the Great. Recently, I found myself observing mentoring in action when I took my dog to Auburn University's veterinary teaching hospital. In that environment, senior veterinary students both stepped up to conduct clinical evaluations and answer questions and stepped back to listen to the expert assessments from professors.

As with any profession, entering a new job in pulp, paper, and related industries is filled with uncertainties and stress, with a new learning curve around every corner. On the flip side, attracting and keeping talent is a challenge for mature industries like pulp and paper that compete for top engineering and science graduates.

For the benefit of new graduates, their companies, and the industry itself, TAPPI's Leadership Council formed the TAPPI Young Professionals (YP) Committee in 2009. This new committee works to cultivate the industry's future leaders through networking, mentoring and continuing education. Its goal is to help students navigate the big leap from college to the working world, while encouraging them to get involved and advance the industry.

New committee for new professionals

The YP committee first formed at PaperCon 2009, where it was mostly comprised of TAPPI student members, along with established TAPPI members (and mentors) like Steve Tremont (PIMA Div.), Philip Wells (Water Removal Committee) and Roger Smith (PIMA Executive Council). Today, the group is shaped by students close to graduation, recent graduates, and young professionals, as well as veteran professionals that want to build connections and share expertise.

After the initial meeting, the YP Committee devised ideas for PaperCon sessions in 2010. This year, a full YP track was created for PaperCon, with committee members participating in program development and slated for moderating, panelist or co-chair activities. For example, the Papermakers Program offers sessions where YPs will participate, such as those on imple-

menting LEAN, Six Sigma and similar programs, as well as a panel discussion of young engineers on paper machine process engineering.

This January, the Papermakers Committee offered YPs as a whole to participate in a webinar on improving paper machine energy performance led by TAPPI Fellow Dick Reese, opening the door for discussion from employees at all experience levels. At International Paper's Courtland, AL, mill, the Webinar even became part of a social activity for its young employees.

According to Colynn Boyd, Chair of the YP Committee and a process engineer at Evergreen Packaging in Pine Bluff, AK, the new committee is looking for mentors who can provide access to technical expertise and practical know-how for those new to industry. Boyd has been involved with the committee since it began, and she sees its potential for adding the extra perspective that can make a difference for a young professional like herself.



Colynn Boyd,
*Young Professionals
Committee Chair.*

"It's a really big transition going from a small lab into a noisy industrial environment with 250 ft boilers," says Boyd. "This committee provides the opportunity to share experiences with our peers, while also learning from experts in a particular technical area that provide valuable perspectives from outside our own mills. By participating, new graduates progress the learning curve more quickly and are prepared for new experiences with more than just a degree and a hard hat."

Mentoring those new to the industry is a critical part of ensuring its viability for years to come. If you'd like to be a mentor and share your expertise and skills, or are a young professional who would like to participate, please visit <http://www.tappi.org/yp> or contact Libby Hardison (ehardison@tappi.org).

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