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'By Chance' is Not a Workforce Strategy

"I fell into this industry by chance and was unaware of the scope and scale of the pulp and paper industry," says Westlake Chemical's Brady Hunnicutt on page 48 of this issue. We asked members of TAPPI's Young Professional Division to share their career journeys; I'll bet Brady's "industry origin story" is one you have heard before. "I'd never even thought about papermaking until I saw my first paper machine..."—"I heard my university's 'paper school' was giving scholarships, so I checked it out and got hooked..."—"I needed a job, and the plant had a help wanted sign. I didn't know I'd be making boxes for the next 30 years..."

These are all great stories. The problem is that "Well, they'll find us by accident" is a terrible way to build a strong workforce. From raw mill hands to newly-minted engineers, our manufacturing facilities need people ready to learn, grow, and just plain show up. To get them on our team, we need more than luck—we need strategies.

Our Trendspotting section in this issue is all about building a sustainable workforce. There's no hand-wringing here; we're talking about action—and I hope readers will heed the call. First, we present a proposal for a National Bipartisan Forest Products Workforce Council (page 15). If this is something you feel you or your company can support, please contact one of the authors. We offer information about an existing program designed to prepare transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard members, reservists, and military spouses for rewarding careers in manufacturing (page 16). We also speak with an ex-Navy nuclear technician about his own initiative to help local tissue mills (page 18). If you're already working in training or health and safety, whether for a manufacturer or a supplier company, we hope you'll choose to help TAPPI create an industry-focused plan to hire and safely train the pulp and paper workforce of the future (page 17). Throughout this issue, readers will find content designed around careers in our amazing industry.

Which brings us back to Brady Hunnicutt. You'll also find him listed elsewhere in this issue: on page 30, as part of *Paper360*'s annual Top 50 Power List. Chance may have led him to this industry, but his work with TAPPI's IFPED YP Technical Leadership Development Program proves that he's not leaving it up to chance for his fellow YPs. It's the perfect complement to his industry origin story.

If this issue's content resonates with you, I'd love to hear from you at jbottiglieri@tappi.org. And Brady: drop me a note if you want me to send a few extra print issues your way to share with family and friends. They deserve to know how far this industry is taking you. **360**



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