

# Turbo Leadership Systems™

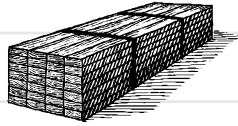
## The **TURBO** **Charger**

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Issue 154

To our clients and friends

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### Backed Up vs. Stacked Up



Larry W. Dennis, Sr.  
President,  
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Systems®

*Nothing so  
useless as  
the right  
answer to  
the wrong  
problem.*

A few months back, Turbo Wood Products Division began work with a second generation privately held Northwest lumber manufacturer. They have two sawmills with only one planer. The company had a big problem that was getting bigger by the day. To work around this situation, they were selling rough green wood to a competitor for final processing into dimension lumber. They were doing this even though they knew it wasn't the best decision from a profit standpoint.

Once their planer capability was improved, they started bringing all of the wood over from the second facility. Their plan was to process the extra wood through their rough stacker to get it ready for the kilns. As the wood started flowing from one mill to the other, it wasn't getting stacked and ready for the kilns as planned. Instead it was staged in the rough yard, resulting in a huge inventory starting to build up.

The problem identified by mill personnel was that the green stacker was too old and couldn't keep up with the demands of the additional wood. What developed was nothing less than a crisis as inventory levels rose and winter approached. Management dictated that inventory levels had to come down at all costs, even if it meant overtime and hiring extra people. The immediate solution was to hire crews to hand stack and sticker wood in addition to overtime hours on the sawmill stacker.

Rather than accept the idea that the sawmill stacker was inadequate, we took a hard look at the numbers. We gathered a task force team of mill personnel to talk about the operation of the stacker. This group included operators, millwrights, electricians, and supervisors. Using parameters supplied by this group, we determined that the capability of the green stacker far exceeded the production volume of the sawmills. Efficiency calculations revealed that the stacker could stack over 600,000 board feet per shift and the two mills

together were producing about 400,000. This meant there should be more than enough time to stack all the primary sawmill production, and all the wood coming from the second mill as well.

The efficiency evaluation revealed that the problem was not with the stacker, it was with all the equipment around the stacker and the accepted practices in place for stacking lumber. The Turbo task force developed a list of issues that kept the stacker from running at peak efficiency. This list included mechanical and electrical problems. It also highlighted issues associated with scheduling practices which kept the machine from operating at peak efficiency.

Once the team started focusing on the real issues affecting performance, things started to turn around fast. Within two weeks, the backlog of inventory was wiped out and the hand stacking crews were gone. By the end of four weeks, the stacking crews were out of wood and staying ahead of the primary sawmill and the wood coming from the other plant, all without a single dollar spent on capital improvements.

For over 23 years, Turbo Leadership Systems, along with our Paper and Wood Products Divisions, have helped our clients with the advantage of a Turbo Task Force to identify the root causes of plaguing issues. By focusing on the "vital few", and unlocking the potential of a motivated workforce, we are able to generate specific actions to solve persistent problems, save money, and insure capital dollars are invested wisely. ###

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