

# Turbo Leadership Systems™

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

Phone: (503) 625-1867 • Fax: (503) 625-2699 • email: [admin@turbols.com](mailto:admin@turbols.com)

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To our clients and friends

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### *Line 'em Up, Line 'em All Up*



Larry W. Dennis, Sr.  
President,  
Turbo Leadership  
Systems©

*Sometimes you  
must bend  
to create  
alignment.*

**J**im, Maintenance Supervisor of a wood products mill in Springfield, Oregon, currently in the process of an ownership change, reported the following:

"I was at the mill on a recent Saturday, focused on some 'fun' – 'hands on' cleanup work. Our maintenance crew had fabricated and was installing a new in-feed section to one of our saws. We planned on this being our last 'significant' project prior to the change in ownership. I had turned the project over to our young lead millwright who had the skills and experience to complete the project.

At about 10:00am the old section had been removed and the new section was in place ahead of schedule. Our lead millwright called me over to give me the honor of lining up the new straight edge. When we ran a string line through the machine it became apparent that we had a problem we hadn't seen coming. The position of our new section put the feeder and the saw 6" out of alignment!

We also had another problem; our lead millwright stopped talking. I had experienced this in the past. When faced with a difficult situation sometimes he would verbally shut down while his mind ground away at a solution. Unfortunately, you never knew how long he would mentally grind. It was coming up on lunch Saturday and the saw had to be in operation Monday morning!

I made the decision to send the crew to lunch and asked the lead millwright if he wouldn't mind eating in his office. The crew left and I took some quick measurements and tried to get the overall system and problem firmly in my head ... and gave our lead millwright some time alone to think and hopefully relax.

When I got to his office I asked, 'What should we do?' This question was answered by silence ... so I grabbed a piece of paper and wrote out 'move the skinner saw and blow detector 6" south' (which would be close to a week's

worth of work!). My lead smiled, laughed at me and said something like, 'That would work but it seems kind of stupid'. That opened him up and we began brainstorming ideas – we came up with a list of 6-7 options and picked the best one.

We went out on the floor, explained to the crew what had happened, and explained what we were going to do about it. We also started recruiting people to come in on Sunday because we knew the project was going to take extra time. I chose to drop the other project I was working on and attempted to become the best and most enthusiastic millwright helper Oregon had ever seen.

In addition, I kept my eyes and ears open. Guys from the crew were coming up to me asking ... 'If we move this – then that's going to be in the way'. My responses were mostly, 'I see the same thing and agree ... what do you think we should do about it?' If they didn't have an answer – I did – or we found one together.

The saw ran Monday morning – with some minor problems. Two weekends later we made another major change to the feeder (it had been on our brainstorm list) and now the saw is producing more wood per shift and at a higher level of quality.

Post script – I caught a fair amount of crap from some of the maintenance folks and supervisors who didn't come in on the weekend to help on the project – 'why didn't you do this', or 'why didn't you do that?' Pinned on the corkboard next to my desk is the quote from Theodore Roosevelt 'The Critic' – 'It is not the critic who counts ... the credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena...'"

This is a great story of an empowering leader who exercises courage, takes risks, listens, solicits ideas, adjusts his style to ensure problems are solved in a productive way.

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