

# Keeping An Eye On The Game

by Anna Wells , Editor, IMPO



"I think one of the most difficult things to do right now is keep a critical eye on the game."

**-Anna Wells**

As a major league baseball fan I've spent many summer nights throwing things at the television. A recent Milwaukee Brewers game was particularly miserable for me, and after we took a six run hit in the first inning, I made sure the remote control was poised for a channel change.

But I know this maneuver is a bit of a balk—there is something weirdly competitive that keeps me locked in to these games, even when times get really tough, and it appears there is no way out. I want to stop watching, but I'm too optimistic. My philosophy as it relates to baseball is that we can always find a way to eke out a win.

Much the same, reading the latest in manufacturing news can be a bit bleak. The past few weeks have brought us announcements of massive job cuts and financial losses from GM—an OEM many view as a legacy manufacturer, and a cornerstone to the U.S. job market. It's becoming difficult to watch, especially amidst talks of reduced consumer spending, increasing offshore competition, and that ugly word recession.

I think one of the most difficult things to do right now is keep a critical eye on the game.

Instead of changing the channel, now is the time to renew our focus on the things we can do to retain profitability. I recently attended the NA '08 material handling trade show in Cleveland and was quite reassured by the efforts many material

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handling equipment manufacturers are making in the name of improving efficiency. Many companies were showcasing new products with energy efficiency or preventive maintenance elements, knowing full well that tough times call for action.

One lift truck company is helping buyers finance new equipment purchases with the help of the economic stimulus package. Others launched products that drastically reduce energy costs. I even spoke with a consulting company who has so much confidence in its services that it will forgo payment until you save money.

I'm not suggesting that these companies are stepping in to selflessly save customers in these tough times—obviously they want to make a profit—but my point is this: keeping our heads down and ignoring the miserable news around us will accomplish nothing. We're still backing this team, so we need to do everything we can to make sure we stay competitive. That being said, are you doing your part to stay in tune with the latest technological trends and opportunities to save money? Do you have a plan of action for keeping your company in the game for the long haul?

There is no easy answer right now, but the important point is to make sure we stay tuned in. Ignoring the bad news will get us nowhere. For me, even if the Brewers lose a game or two, I can't lose faith in the team—some seasons are just tougher than others.

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