

Teamwork Is The Strongest Levee

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"Perhaps we should do a better job of fostering this idea of teamwork." - **Anna Wells**

In recent weeks, as you no doubt have heard, the Midwest has been bombarded with water. My parents live on the outskirts of a small town near a river, and were keeping me on alert as to the daily status of their water line. They expected some flooding, but no one really knew how much or how bad.

I was not surprised then to get a call from my mother one Saturday morning, asking if I could come home and help fill sandbags with the “truckload” of sand that was now occupying their driveway.

As family, we do these miserable things for one another—my parents have picked me up at many an airport, helped me through countless moves, and even took in the stray cat I fell in love with in college. This is the least I can do.

Surprisingly, after changing into grubby shorts, stocking up on bottled water, and driving to their house, I see several things I hadn’t expected—1. There is more water than I had ever imagined. The street is a three foot deep pool of brown sludge with children literally canoeing from house to house. 2. My parents' small neighborhood is suddenly packed with people, and the sandbagging is already finished.

Something about this odd weather disaster has caused a whole community to band together and help one another out—people I’ve never seen before are

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wandering my parents' neighborhood in waders and baseball caps, looking for ways to be of assistance. It's funny that this situation has caused an entire team to come out of the woodwork—a team that likely existed before this, but no one ever knew about it.

It got me thinking about the concept of a team, and how we often don't utilize the resources we have until we're in the position of 'firefighting.' I'd wager a guess that this exists a lot in the plant environment—hardworking folks who keep their heads down and do their jobs, but are always going to be there when something needs to be done in a hurry.

Perhaps we should do a better job of fostering this idea of teamwork. It was a nice surprise that day with the outpouring of support, but maybe we shouldn't wait until disaster happens to feel confident in our abilities as a team. If these groups with the same ultimate goals exist (in my parents' case, look at it like a neighborhood's version of "uptime"), we should celebrate them—and it's attitudes like these that start at the top.

I realize this may sound cliché, but as plant managers, it really is up to you to be the captain of this team. Let your employees know on a day-to-day basis that your leadership can be counted on—and not just in times of crisis. Firming up the strengths of your team can come in handy in times when you may not expect needing a few extra hands.

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