

The future of the chemical industry

... and of *Chemical Processing* magazine

The forces that will drive the future of the chemical industry are already in motion. A recent survey by *Chemical Processing*'s research team pinpoints three prominent trends that will affect the industry over the next three years:

■ **Government regulations.** Those surveyed indicate an inordinate amount of time is spent complying with environmental regulations. That makes it hard to become the low-cost producer and could move chemical industry operations offshore.

■ **Globalization of trade.** Globalization is driving the need to be the low cost producer with products of the highest quality.

You have to reduce costs and you have to keep quality high.

■ **Finding and maintaining qualified people.** It's becoming more and more difficult to find qualified, experienced people. The downsizing movement that began in the early '90s is continuing to take a toll. Qualified, experienced people simply aren't available to do certain types of work.

Outlook

In recent months, *Chemical Processing* has covered important developments that offer solutions to these concerns. Namely:

Environmental management systems that are used as a step in the right direction. The movement toward environmental management systems, including ISO 14000, offers hope for proactive companies to move out of the "command and control" environmental culture to a "self-control" mode of operation. It will take time for industry and government to evolve workable and streamlined operations, but progress is being made.

Automation and information technology are essential tools. The need to be the low-cost producer is bringing automation, information technology and a higher level of process control onto the horizon. Improved process control will allow better yields of more profitable materials and increased production of products with the highest profit margins. *Chemical Processing* predicts tighter integration of all plant and corporate systems at every level.

Qualified, experienced people remain the biggest challenge. The biggest short- and long-term challenge will be finding and keeping qualified people to carry out the important work that lies ahead. In the aftermath of downsizing, the industry faces a more challenging agenda of work than ever before for those who have remained. More powerful problem solving tools have been developed too.

Culture shift. The most profound long-term development is the movement toward "sustainable development," including the evolution of concepts such as "eco-efficiency" in the business community. Our June and July issues reported on some of those developments ("Emerging changes in EH&S functions at the

plant," "BP emphasizes sustainable development," "Dow chairman speaks on integrating EH&S goals").

In the coming year we will continue to cover those and other subjects while introducing new emphasis in areas such as:

- Powder and particle technology;
- The integrated chemical enterprise;
- Catalysis;
- Biosciences;
- Pumping and advanced fluid systems;
- Career development;
- Project management and design for global enterprises.



Building on 60 years of progress

In September 1938, the first issue of *Equipment Preview for Process Industries Production* reached 20,000 plants throughout the United States with the stated mission: "To keep (readers) abreast of the latest developments in new equipment, machines and products applicable in process manufacturing."

Equipment Preview ultimately developed into *Chemical Processing* with a circulation of 72,000. During this period, *CP* has evolved without losing sight of the mission declared 60 years ago.

As we look back on 60 years of progress, this issue recaps highlights of the past in John McCallion's article "*Chemical Processing* magazine still young on 60th anniversary," in Ted Wett's "Challenges never end for the chemical industry," and in Mike Hrickiewicz's "A 60-year industry scorecard."

But how do you celebrate a 60th birthday in the pages of a magazine?

Perhaps it is best accomplished through a glimpse of the past, as captured by these seasoned editors, and a promise for the future, which is expressed in the *Chemical Processing* mission statement: "The most trusted information source for the global chemical industry."

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