



Seize the future or step aside

And look to *CP* for the industry's best assessments of what to expect...

After our air-conditioned bus had meandered for an hour in the process units of a spotless Gulf Coast chemical plant, I was left with one puzzling question.

"Where is everybody?"

Not a single person was walking in the plant. It was eerie. Shouldn't I have seen at least one of the 5,000 on-site workers out there turning a valve, checking for leaks or just strolling through the units? The plant's workforce couldn't all be in control rooms, laboratories and offices...or could they?

A sense of awe swept over me as I realized how far the leading companies have come in automation, control and maintenance management systems. People just don't need to work out in the units these days.

The job of a chemical plant operator has changed dramatically in the past decade, and more significant changes lie just ahead. e-Business is also changing the way people interact and do their work.

So, what is the "future of work?" How will it affect you and the way you do business?

This month's cover story, "The Integrated Chemical Enterprise," provides a glimpse of what's to come in the years 2000 to 2003 as business systems become more closely linked with the plants. Here's what some industry leaders expect to see:

Leif Erikson of AMR Research:

- Operations people and the operations team will be more knowledgeable and make decisions on a broader range of problems;

- They will be given better tools and information;

- A lot of today's specialized on-site expertise will no longer be needed, because plants will have real-time access to higher-level expertise all over the world.

Scott Fawcett of Microsoft:

- Common communications will be on the Web;

- e-Commerce will be the way of doing business;

- Fewer people will work in the plants, and work will be more challenging for those who remain.

Chris Larsen of SAP:

- Companies will push for tighter integration from the shop floor to the process control MES (management execution systems) back into whatever backbone ERP (enterprise resource planning) systems exist;

- People throughout organizations will have access to more data—not just the people who sit in the offices at the plant, but also more and more people across the plant;

- Workers will have more hand-held, palm-top wearable devices. A plant maintenance worker, for example, could be walking along with a device clipped to his or her belt; the worker, seeing that a machine has an extra vibration or that oil is dripping, will whip out the computer and send off a

maintenance work order without using a piece of paper.

As *Chemical Processing's* editors look forward to the year 2000 and reflect on the changes of the past year that have helped us get closer to you, our readers, a special "thank you" is given to our Council of Readers, who provide monthly feedback on how we are serving your needs. Some of the articles you liked best this year included:

- Understanding the Past to Safeguard the Future;
- Understanding Your Working Style;
- Making Teams Work;
- 'Seven Habits' of a Highly Successful Project;
- Industry Leaders Roundtable;
- Eco-efficiency: Hype or the Future?;
- Troubleshooting Distillation;
- Preventing Dust Explosions;
- Seventeen Level Sensing Methods;
- Filtration—the Crisis Continues.

Our nine-member editorial advisory board of industry opinion leaders has also played a critical role this year in keeping *Chemical Processing* magazine on the cutting edge of new developments in technology and the management issues that affect you and the way you do your work.

It's our charter at *Chemical Processing* to mix those cutting-edge articles on the issues shaping the industry with the solid "how to" technical articles that have been the backbone of *CP* for decades.

And as the 20th century comes to a close, the *Chemical Processing* team extends to you our best wishes for the holiday season and prosperity in the new millennium!



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