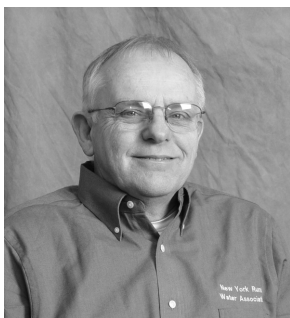


Shared Services...Etc.

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There it is... out there for all to see. To some, those two words mean fear, to others, it may as well be a foreign language. Another couple of words that scare the heck out of me are “we have always done it that way.” Change happens, it is inevitable. Think back to your first encounter with a computer. Was

your thought “we don't need these things”, or did you see the possibilities. How many times in a day do you now use your computer or are computerized. Your car has a computer, cell phone, microwave oven, the list is endless. Computers in the workplace have given back that precious commodity of time.

Record keeping, reports or issuing the water bill are now not as cumbersome as they used to be. However, no matter how much time is saved, now more than ever, the budget is the main concern. Doing more with less is becoming the norm. Another tool to be added to the operations toolbox is a budget stretcher.

Most all water and wastewater systems do a lot of similar tasks, maintenance issues, daily lab requirements, the same equipment for hydrant repair or leak location.

Lab supplies can be purchased from many different companies. Shop around, compare prices, and buy in bulk. You have heard this before. As an example, let's use a simple everyday thing, pH buffer reagents. Don't use much on a daily basis, but very critical to proper testing procedures. Look in the catalogs, no wait, we can now shop on-line. This is getting easier, time saving. pH buffers can be purchased in varying sizes. One gallon of buffer is priced at approximately twenty dollars. Five gallons of buffer is fifty-five dollars, but I can't use five gallons before it expires. Something always screws up a good plan. Better planning such as shared purchasing with other systems will fit here. Today's math problem is buying one gallon at twenty dollars or buy with shared and pay eleven dollars. Simple math, and now we are using the new tool, budget stretcher.

Looks simple, but that's the point, we overlook the simple or the little things. Somewhere in your job description it may say “attention to detail”. Operators should be detailed oriented.

Look at other equipment, most of it is expensive and is not used on a regular basis or only for emergencies. Every so often a waste plant experiences an upset. The best tool to have is a microscope. A good microscope costs big bucks and is only needed every so often. Why not use shared purchases and cut costs, and still be able to have access to the equipment

you need to make process control decisions. If five plants got together and purchased a microscope that means the cost is reduced to one-fifth. Simple math.

One-fifth of something is economical, then buying the whole thing, new tool, budget stretcher in use.

Go to the big picture. Plants that are constructed today are approaching unaffordable for some communities. Millions of dollars for construction and thousands of dollars for yearly operations are making user fees higher and higher. Recent surveys have found the national average for combined water and sewer is one thousand dollars per year. That's an average, some pay more, and those who are paying less, your time will come. Failing home septic systems can, and will, pollute drinking water sources. Public sewer systems and treatment facilities are almost mandatory to protect our drinking water sources. Shared services are becoming a way to survive. Simple arithmetic, the more who are sharing the costs, the less cost to the individual, or in this case, share the cost of vital services to preserve and protect vital resources. Think about it. ♠

In Appreciation...

