

What Are Your Management Policies?

Are they working in the best interest of your customers?

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In my travels throughout the Eastern part of New York State, as a Circuit Rider for the Association, I have been asking the operators I encounter for their feedback on how they feel their upper management's role in their day to day operations of their systems is working. As you would expect, I have gotten a wide variety of answers to this question. Everything from, I have never seen our Mayor and/or Board Members to, the Mayor is here every day telling me what to do and how to do it. Depending on individual circumstances, either of these approaches can work, but are they the right choices?

In the case of the first extreme, one should ask, how can the Mayor, and Board members make budgetary decisions affecting the systems operations if they have never even seen the system or have any idea how the day to day operation works. This same thing goes for Town Supervisors and their Council people as well as Village or Town Managers. Please don't take this as a form of criticism of these folks, but rather a plea for them to take the opportunity to try to get a little training as to what you do and at a minimum, spend some time with you at your plants and in your distribution system so they can see what they are making their decisions on. We have a board training video that we offer to bring to a meeting on your behalf that can give some insight to what you do, but in my opinion, the best training you can give these people is a tour through your system explaining every detail of what you do. I did this with the Board Members in my Village and at the end of the day they had a much greater appreciation of what our guys and gals do.

When we look at the opposite extreme mentioned above, we would have to ask why we need you in the first place if the Mayor is going to do your job for you.

We all know the months of training we went through to get our Operator Certifications as well as the ongoing training – Continuing Education Units (CEU's) we have to get to maintain our certifications. We know we have to be able to do the mathematical calculations to keep the chemical dosages correct. We know we have to be able to repair that chemical dosing pump when it stops working. We know we have to troubleshoot that electrical problem causing this or that not to work. We know that we have to have the plumbing skills to repair those broken pipes. We know we need the ability to keep our employees safe while making that repair on the water main in the

middle of the street, in the middle of the night, as well as in the middle of the afternoon. We know that whenever that leak pops up (Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day, your baby's first birthday, or any other day 24/7, 365), we have to drop everything and go to work. THANK YOU ALL FOR THAT BY THE WAY.

The point I am trying to make here is that in these very difficult economic times, we really need to take a look at how our management practices are working. We need to use every one of our resources in the most efficient manner possible. We need to realize our limitations. Our survival depends on a team effort, not an individual approach. A manager with the highest educational degree doesn't automatically know the best way to run your system. Experience does matter. Cutting budget items to lower the bottom line can sometimes cost you more in the long run. Not repairing things in the interest of saving money now, can cost you in the way of fines in not meeting compliance standards.

In closing, I ask that anyone reading this in a management position take the time to give these ideas a chance. I know that if you do, you will learn to have a higher level of respect for your Operators and they, in turn, will have an increased respect in you for taking the time to understand what they do. I believe if we adopt these types of ideas in our management practices we will all be better off in the end. 💧



NYRWA Won the 2nd Annual SEMS Bowling Tournament in Louisville, KY - Retaining the title "1st Place"