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## In The Spotlight

*An Interview with Scott LeBeau, Resident Mill Manager, Graphic Packaging International*

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TAPPI caught up with Scott LeBeau, Resident Mill Manager with Graphic Packaging International in Kalamazoo, MI, to ask him what he felt was important to managing a successful mill. Read what he had to say.

**T: What do you feel are some key elements required to successfully manage and develop a strong team?**

S: The team needs clear goals and expectations and must maintain open and constant communication. Regular measurement of progress and the ability to adjust when things are not on track are vital. Also, understanding the core competencies of your team and being aware of your blind spots are necessary.

**T: What has been the greatest challenge you have faced managing your mill?**

S: Filling the pipeline of talent. As we have turnover and openings, it is challenging to find strong candidates in a timely manner where you get a fit for both them and the organization.

**T: Your team has attended PaperCon in the past. How has PaperCon helped you and/or your mill achieve your goals?**

S: A couple things stick out: the PIMA management sessions have been insightful. Most of the people who have gone have commented on the value of those sessions including the roundtables. A lot of recent focus has been on retaining young professionals and making sure they're engaged. Everyone is focused on retaining and attracting good young talent.

The exhibit is a good opportunity to informally get updated on what's new and going on from a technology standpoint. We don't get time to talk to vendors at our own facilities in that kind of way, so it's a great format. The social aspect is important as well.



*An Interview with Scott LeBeau, Resident Mill Manager, Graphic Packaging International cont.*

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**T: What would you say to mill managers who are unsure whether PaperCon offers enough benefits to justify the cost of sending their team?**

S: If they're uneasy or unsure, something to think about is to send a small group, go along with them for part of the time, and when you get back to your location, discuss what you gained and how you can utilize what you learned at your facility. If you're part of an organization that has multiple mills, select a multisite group to attend together and take advantage of the mill program.

**T: How has the market changed since you started with Graphic? What changes has your mill taken to stay competitive in the future?**

S: In our segment of the paper industry, there's been consolidation of the market. Packaging is strong but a lot of things still hold true. You have to execute every day and every year to stay competitive. I don't think a tremendous amount has changed to be honest with you.

**T: PaperCon's theme is Renew – Rethink – Redefine the Future. If you apply this theme to your mill, where have you renewed your mill operations to be more efficient? Have you found that in the past few years you have also needed to rethink your processes or even the marketplace in order to stay competitive? How will your mill help redefine the future?**

S: We focus on refining how we do things constantly. The concept of continuous improvement is part of who we are. We're always looking at tweaking and improving our processes and our methods.

**T: Any other final thoughts?**

S: One of the reasons a lot of us are attracted to this industry is there is a lot going on. We have to balance the daily work with longer term strategic planning. You and your team have to be dynamic to make it all happen. Balancing those challenges is very rewarding, and it makes it gratifying when it all comes together.

*TAPPI would like to thank Scott for sharing his views with PaperCon.*