

Willard Says.....

Success Story #4

I jumped at the chance to visit a lovely East Coast resort area wherein dwelled a sand and gravel producer with a new operation and a sick dredge. Life does not get much better than an invitation to visit an ailing dredge at the behest of a distraught owner because they listen “real good”.

Valuable advice (including these papers) is easy to ignore because it is offered without cost and thus perceived to be of little value. Folks who pay for advice tend to heed that advice—they listen “real good”.

I met the owner, a self-made, successful entrepreneur and Ken (not his real name), his young manager and protégé. They had a tremendous demand for product that they were unable to supply. Buying sand from their competitors was not a satisfactory solution.

We took a ride on the dredge. The first lack was that of a velocity meter and Ken, having done his homework, anticipated and agreed to that recommendation.

The dredge had a forty-foot-long ladder and was digging almost pure sand that is slightly cemented. The cutter could easily loosen the material at a satisfactory rate, however, this occurred infrequently because the digging depth at times was only 12 to 15 feet. The relatively long ladder combined with a shallow digging depth caused “heeling off” to occur most of the time. Heeling off occurs when the suction pipe or ladder frame comes to rest on a bank of solids back of the suction inlet and prevents the suction inlet/digger from staying in contact with pumpable solids. I recommended that they install a Dutchman—bend the cutter end of the ladder downward 25 to 30 degrees—to prevent heeling off.

They commenced work the next day and two days later they were back in operation equipped with a new velocity meter and a Dutchman.

Problem solved. Velocity was controlled and production was held constant at a rate that filled the process plant to capacity. Production now exceeds sales and dredge operation is now intermittent: scheduled only as need to replenish stockpiles as they are drawn down.

The per-ton cost of production has been reduced to a very satisfactory number. The yield of specification product is higher than projected because the classifying tank—now being fed a constant flow—operates at maximum efficiency.

Got a problem? Contact me.

Comment, question, criticism, information on products mentioned? Contact willard@willardsays.com