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HMA members discuss facility upgrades

“(Un)Conventional Problem Solving – an HMA Member Panel,” was the opening session of HMA’s 2018 National Conference and Expo. Comprised of representatives from 3 HMA member companies, Middle Tennessee Lumber Company, New River Hardwoods, and Pike Lumber Company, Inc., each participant discussed the why/how and lessons learned of recently completed capital upgrades. (Thank you to HMA President, Bob Miller, who served as panel moderator.)

Middle Tennessee Lumber Company - Josh Green, Plant Manager

- A new rough mill installation was undertaken to simplify, streamline and improve processes, increase production and profitability, and maximize the value of “every single board.”
- “We wanted to process one board every two seconds.” To accomplish that, we had to be creative in our thinking, be collaborative, patient and hardworking.
- **Bottom Line Results** – “My boss is happy!” Production goals have been met and labor costs are down.
- **Lessons learned** – Adequately train employees for the changes that will result from such upgrades.

New River Hardwoods - Wayne Law, President & David Bailey, VP of Operations

- In the process of upgrading an idled sawmill, a slabber head was included in the retrofit to increase production and realize an expeditious payback.
- Successful implementation was the result of “total project buy-in” from vendors, installers and employees.
- **Bottom Line Results** – “This is where the rubber meets the road!” A 28 percent increase in production has been realized. “A no-brainer project that did what we wanted it to do.”
- **Lessons learned** - Bottlenecks have resulted in the ‘process,’ that are being currently addressed.

Pike Lumber Company, Inc. - Brian Schilling, VP of Engineering

- In order to realize the company’s increasing production goals, and to minimize process interruption, it was determined that an automated stacker would be integral in meeting production goals.
- We did our research plus acquired a lot of information from trusted suppliers, HMA member companies and HMA’s Equipment Center, all great resources that added to the successful implementation of the project.
- **Bottom Line Results** - The resulting ‘numbers’ support our capital investment decision. Production goals have been met. Hourly labor costs are down. Proficiency levels have improved.
- **Lessons learned** – Going forward, do a better job of tracking man-hours and project costs.

The PowerPoint and audio portions of the entire session are available in the **Members Only** section of www.HMAmembers.org.