Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
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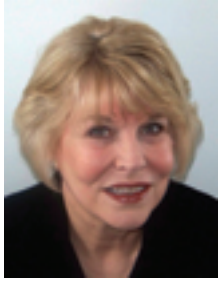

A Gathering Of Innovative Eagles

I had the joy of sailing around the post-holiday doldrums last month by spending a couple of days at the 2013 Shell Innovation Summit. As an invited media guest, to say that I felt like an odd duck among a gathering of eagles would be quite the understatement. But you know me: I do love “innovation” and will travel far and wide to learn about the concept—*then write about it as it applies to your jobs, your suppliers and our magazine.*

This January event, held at the Shell Technology Center in Houston, was full of it (innovations and innovators and those who support them, that is), from both Shell and non-Shell sources. The formal program was marked by a number of compelling presentations, panel discussions and videos from in and outside industry. The informal program offered some of the finest networking opportunities I’ve ever experienced. I was like a kid in a candy shop when it came to deciding which innovative spirit to talk with next. Would it be the head of the X PRIZE Foundation, who sat next to me in the audience; the professor on my shuttle bus, who teaches an entire course devoted to innovation at Texas A&M; the astronaut across the table from me at lunch one day; or those very enthusiastic members of Shell’s GameChanger Team who were everywhere? How about all the above and lots of others?

Trying to choose specific takeaways from the Summit to share with you here is also difficult (there were so many). One that resonated loud and clear, though, came from top Shell management: To help fuel innovative thinking, the company has recognized the importance of breaking down information silos across its operations, upstream and down. As Gerald Schotman, Chief Technology Officer and Executive VP, Innovation Research & Development noted, “Real innovation relies on co-creation, collaborative problem-solving and cultivating next-generation ideas from within and outside the company to pioneer unique solutions.” Refreshing, huh?

Of course, if you’ve been reading this magazine for very long, you know that we have our own vested interest in growing and recognizing innovators and innovations—*albeit in the maintenance and reliability arena*
. In fact, we’re now involved in the judging process for our “2012 Maintenance & Reliability

Innovator Award" (the winner of which will be announced in March). We're also putting together details of the 2013 competition that will run from June 1 – December 31.

That leads me to this month's pitch: Why not start breaking down some of those pesky information silos in your operations, get your innovative selves in gear and go for this year's award? Or, how about getting your team members in gear and encouraging their participation?

Need a jump-start? Check out this month's "Viewpoint" by Matt Hudson on page 48. Matt was one of the remarkable Shell GameChangers that I met in January. Rather than attempt to quote him, I asked him to tell you in his own words about his experiences in the area of innovative thinking. He's done a fine job. I hope you'll enjoy his column, be inspired by it and, most important, let it help you inspire others on your team(s). **MT**

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