

CHAPTER 12. PLANT MANAGER

A critical part of any business is having a good manager. For your fish plant to succeed, you need to have a good manager running it.



The manager has to think about everything that needs to be done to make the plant a success—and make sure that it gets done. Sometimes he may have to do it himself.

Your manager needs to be good with people: hiring people who can do the work, teaching them how to do it, and getting them to do the work well. Your manager needs to be good with equipment— from boat engines to ice-making machines to vacuum sealers. He or she needs to know how to use equipment, how to maintain it, and how to fix it when it breaks, or how to find someone who can fix it. Your manager needs to be good at keeping track of how much money is being spent and

how much money is coming in, and not spending too much money. Your manager has to know what supplies are needed and order them in time.

During the season, being a fish plant manager is a full-time job—seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. The manager has to be ready to deal with problems at any time—equipment breakdowns, power failures, injured workers.

For your plant to succeed, the manager will have to make tough decisions. If markets aren't good, the manager may have to decide to pay fishermen lower prices than they want. The manager may have to decide not to buy fish from fishermen who aren't handling their fish carefully enough. The manager may have to fire workers who aren't doing their jobs.

Getting a good manager is particularly important the first season, since you will be doing everything for the first time and that's when the most problems are likely to occur.



Usually it takes experience in the fish business to manage a successful fish processing plant. If there isn't someone in your village who can manage your fish plant, you will need to find someone who can come to the village to manage the plant during the season.

The manager can't always be there to deal with every problem. You need a trained back-up person at the plant who can handle the manager's responsibilities when necessary.



Sydney Huntington



One of the major factors in the success of Dainty Island Seafoods was that the owner and operator—Sydney Huntington-- was talented, energetic, resourceful, highly respected both locally and statewide, and willing to work long hours to face up to regulatory challenges and to meet the demands of his growing market. This picture was taken in 1993.



A manager has to know about more than just processing fish.

Wetlocks sitting in the sun can spontaneously combust--the heat builds up --and they torched off. I said "grab the fire extinguisher!" and they all looked at me and said "what are they?" They were stacked right next to the plant. No one had had fire drills and there wasn't anything in the fire extinguishers anyway. They hadn't been recharged.
—A manager of a Yukon River fish plant recalling an incident shortly after his arrival:



All these operations are people dependent. It's one or two people that can bring them up, and one or two people can bring them to disaster if they walk off.—A former village fish plant operator



Fish Plant Manager Job Description

The 1996 Unalakleet Fish Processing Plant proposal included this job description for the plant manager:

Obtains all necessary federal and state permits for processing seafood for either the fresh or frozen markets

Prepares plans and budgets as it relates to the purchasing and the processing of herring, salmon and crab in the Norton Sound area.

Prepares Quality Control Guidelines for the processing of herring, salmon and crab for the Plant Foreman and seafood processors.

Prepares equipment maintenance schedules for plant foreman to insure that all equipment will operate properly during the entire fishing season.

Directs preparation and distribution of all employee and fisherman payroll and benefits.

Works closely with Marketing manager to insure top dollar is received on the sales of herring, salmon and crab.

Prepare all Federal and State reports that are required at the end of each fishing season. Prepares Annual Operations profit/loss reports for the NEDC Board, and recommended changes for the next year's operations.

Is responsible for the entire operations of the Unalakleet Fish Processing Plant.



Who will manage the plant during its first season?

Does this person have the necessary experience and training for starting up a fish plant?

If you don't have someone in mind yet to manage the plant, how will you find a manager?