

## TIPS INCORPORATED/PACIV INC.

### ALARMS: PROBLEM OR SYMPTOM?

**A**larm management is a relatively new concept in automation. Alarms are a symptom, they're not the problem. Researching alarm problems will lead to unexpected discoveries about the quality of control room information and the many reasons alarms misbehave.

Alarms are victims of their own simplicity. It is much easier to add or change an alarm rather than considering the larger picture. For every situation we think the operator should be aware of, we add an alarm, often without considering the consequences - or other options. Misunderstanding the relationship between alarms and effective human-machine communications has led to the need for alarm manage-

ment, where we force ourselves to evaluate the alarmed condition and strive to find the most effective way to communicate it.

when you question the validity of an alarm, you should determine if there is a more effective way to make the operator aware of the situation. Could a change in a graphic eliminate the need for the alarm? For several alarms?

Establishing clear situation awareness for operators gives them the ability to keep things running smoothly and avoid upsets. This improves the stability and quality of output, reduces equipment wear, minimizes unexpected environmental discharge, and assists in the prevention of unscheduled downtime and incidents.

Fortunately, alarm management is very straightforward. Using a good diagnostic tool, you can find alarms of questionable value and systematically critique them. Adopting this pro-



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ment, where we force ourselves to evaluate the alarmed condition and strive to find the most effective way to communicate it.

Alarms exist to make operators aware of abnormal situations. They are one of many resources used to establish what is called "situation awareness", or knowledge of the condition of your environment. Alarms are intended to help operators target the source of an upset and guide them through its resolution. Alarm management helps control and optimizes the information provided by the alarm system. It is a methodic way of diagnosing and measuring alarm performance on a continuous basis.

Alarms are not the ONLY way to create awareness. More specifically, effectively using human-machine interface graphics can create such an advanced state of awareness that many alarms will be rendered obsolete. Ultimately,

cess of "continuous rationalization" as a regular practice will result in an alarm system that is well configured and very effective at maintaining awareness for operators. It will also ensure that operator graphics and other means of communicating plant condition are well used.

What now? Pick an alarm that you know is troublesome and ask, "Why?" Trace the background of the alarm to find the reason it has become problematic. Document what you find, the conversations you have, and what you do to fix it. Then you will have a better understanding of what alarm management involves, why a team should be formed, and why it should become a part of standard operating practice.

For more information on Alarm Management, visit [www.tipsweb.com](http://www.tipsweb.com) or contact us at PACIV for local service [www.paciv.com](http://www.paciv.com). **B2BX**

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### IS NOT AN ART, BUT A STRATEGIC BUSINESS PROCESS

**O**n today's business environment, leaders must have the capacity to lead a matrix organization with global scope, manage different bosses depending on the business situation, demonstrate innovation and visionary thinking, as well as the ability to execute, hold the highest standards of ethics, develop others at all levels, understand the business as a whole, and build trustful relationships with customers and stakeholders.

This brings the question-How do you move in the right direction, in a balanced and orderly manner in order to build a great leadership culture to help your organization achieve its business goals? Do you understand your critical leadership capability gaps and how to address them? Do your leadership strategies and practices clearly drive business performance? Do you have a bench of leaders who are ready, willing, and able to succeed in critical roles? Do you understand what motivates your top talent?

In order not to be trapped in a fruitless search of the right leaders, it is critical to understand that leadership development is a consequence of a company's process and commitment towards talent development.

In its latest leadership research, Hewitt Associates identified key areas that set the Top Companies for Leaders apart from other companies around the world. The Top Companies have clear strategies around leadership, and they execute on these strategies. Their leadership agenda includes having the right leadership practices and processes for the organization, maintaining a focus on critical talent at all levels with a continuous desire to improve. In addition, these companies share the following characteristics:

Leaders must be passionate and visible with an unwavering commitment to leadership; without this, developing great leaders is not possible

Intense focus on talent throughout the organization

Critical talent is identified, assessed, developed, and differentially rewarded

Business strategy is at the core of programs and practices

Integration and execution are key to achieving desired outcomes

As a result, the Top Companies for Leaders have cultures that cultivate and nurture their talent, and they have a reputation for doing it well. **B2BX**