







Although the format is very similar for each customer, the truth is that we prepare intensely before the group arrives in order to understand their needs in depth."



Immersing a body through rotation rather than dipping is one of the innovations that came out of Geico "Experiment Day".

Another example is the rotating conveyor system that allows bodies to be dipped and transported on the PT/ED line. The feedback from a customer was that it could be difficult to manage. We then developed a system that is much simpler and does exactly what the customer wants. It is extremely easy to maintain and clean, and has fewer components.

**AI: Who attends the Experiment Days?**

**D. Arabnia:** It depends on the nature of the particular Experiment Day. There are always technical people, but depending on the focus we could have top-level managers from manufacturing, engineering, purchasing and the like.

**AI: Please tell us a bit about the J-Next group.**

**D. Arabnia:** We started with J-Next in 2011 when we noticed that the company did not have enough young people. One of the main challenges facing our industry is succession – we need to groom a new generation. Now every year we hire five new fresh graduates. They start with a six-month contract during which we can judge whether they have the right aptitude and passion the job. Those that are selected sign a one year contract. For the next year we send them all around the world to site see if they are able to stay far away from home and work under very difficult circumstances. If they then succeed, we offer them permanent contract.

**AI: Do you learn from the new generation?**

**D. Arabnia:** The Gen X recruits have come up with a number of ideas we would not have thought of. J-Next is for anyone less than 30 years old – in Geico years. That is their age plus the number of years they have been with the company. We do this because we want to tap into the ideas of young people whose minds are not polluted by too much experience in our field.

They meet for a day every week to share new ideas and projects and develop the ideas. Then, every six weeks we have two strategic meetings – a technological innovation meeting, and a cultural innovation meeting. Both take full day.



Customers can experiment with different processes at the Pardis Innovation Centre.

The first hour or two is completely dedicated to our Gen X recruits, who present their ideas to the management of the company. During that same meeting we decide on which projects to go ahead with, which to place on standby, and which are not feasible at present. Gen X team members head up the projects we decide to go ahead with.

In this way Gen X bring new technology into company, and we keep them motivated. It can be described as "reverse mentoring" – where we have youngsters working with senior members in the company. The young graduates bring fresh ideas, and an understanding of the latest technology and thinking which they were exposed to at university. It is a win-win.

**AI: What is the Ideas Workshop?**

**D. Arabnia:** We have a system that allows anyone in company to share their ideas. Every suggestion is analyzed and the head of the department provides feedback to the person who shared the idea. They are told whether we are going to implement their idea or not – and why. And every year at our Christmas party we present a prize to the employee with the best idea.

**AI: No interview can be complete without asking you what progress is being made to meeting the objective of Energy Independence Day on 16 June 2020.**

**D. Arabnia:** We have entered challenging territory. In the beginning even tapping 100 kWh per body was easy. Now every single step requires lot of effort. For the past year we have been focusing on our processes to see how we can make them more efficient. We are asking ourselves what we do every step of the process. In addition we are hosting workshops with academics and other entities to tap into their know-how, even where it is not paintshop-related. There may be technologies and systems we can apply in order to bring the power usage down to 270 kWh per body. At present we are on 320 kWh. We are confident that we will develop a self-sufficient paintshop which can be run on renewable energy – and which has zero emissions. **AI**