

## Faces of the Industry: Mary Zappone

By Evi Arthur, April 27, 2022

### Zappone is CEO and board director at Sundyne



Mary Zappone, CEO of Sundyne, wants those new to the pumps industry to know that their voice holds more power than they think. She tells the story of being a new engineer leading a turnaround changeout at a refinery and being tasked by her boss to gather opinions from the staff on a specific problem, which she diligently did.

After dropping it off on her boss's desk, he asked where in the memo her opinion was. "The funny thing is it never occurred to me to put my opinion in there. It's comical now, as I'm always delighted to share my opinion," Zappone said. "It takes courage to give an opinion."

This interaction early in her career introduced Zappone to the concept of Completed Staff Work. Originally credited to the military, Completed Staff Work is a management principle where staff submits solutions to higher-ups with enough rationale and detail

that all the boss must do is approve or reject the solution.

"This doesn't mean there isn't a place for problem-solving discussions with your boss or team; it means that if the specific request is for a recommendation, then we should be organized, detailed and courageous enough to make that recommendation directly," Zappone said. "My boss modeled the culture the company wanted. He greatly influenced the way I operate, and I always share the concept of Completed Staff Work with all my teams."

As her career continued, Zappone noticed that many teams she spoke to had something in common: there was always more that needed to be done, updated, reviewed, fixed, etc. but there was never any consensus on just who should do it.

Zappone said, after asking a few more questions about the requirements for solving

that issue, it would become clear that the people in the room could do it themselves. "It was not a lack of intellect or drive—it simply had not occurred to them individually or as a group that they could make their workplace, customer service or safety stronger." So, it eventually turned into a mantra for Zappone: "Be the somebody."

"There are always multiple issues and improvements that 'somebody' in a company needs to fix. My advice is that you have more power to drive change than you may think," Zappone said. "Think about a problem or issue you may see that is not being resolved. You may be able to bring a group together to develop a recommendation and implement a solution. Always ask, 'could I be the somebody' to resolve the issue."

*Evi Arthur is associate editor at Pumps & Systems. She can be reached at [earthur@cahabamedia.com](mailto:earthur@cahabamedia.com).*