

# WOOD AND FIBER SCIENCE

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## ESTABLISHING A PERTINENT AND FORWARD-LOOKING RESEARCH AGENDA—MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH YOUR (OUR) WORK

Are you passionate about your work? Or, are you buried in the minutiae of little details and distractions in your organization? Have you identified the big rocks that you need to navigate around and learned to let the pebbles lie (*Stephen Covey would be proud*)? If you haven't identified the big rocks, then we are missing out on your potentially valuable contributions to identify and solve important problems that face us in the utilization of wood as a material. We cannot live without wood in this world, or at least we have needed wood and its associated products for thousands of years. And yet, to name but a few problems, wood still burns, wood still rots, and wood still creeps.

Our journals are filled to the brim with countless studies that ultimately will make little difference—academic fodder that doesn't bear close scrutiny at home for programmatic direction and relevance. But, it still counts as a peer-reviewed publication. Or as a colleague recently put it "I'm tired of publishing another study, where only the product or species has been changed, but the research approach is the same." I couldn't agree more. But it's our own fault—not for the academic system we've built, but for the lack of oversight and accountability in the work (research) we do. Is it relevant? Does it matter? Who cares? Will it make a difference? Is it advancing in a direction that will provide an eventual solution? Or, is it a dirt path that will meander for the next thirty years—or for your career?

You will be most successful if you are working on problems about which you are passionate. Passion and wood and materials in the same breath? Ha! Passion is only for those in the arts and humanities. Go home, put your feet up, and think about what brought you to our line of work in the first place. Then think about where your passion is. If it's not in your work—change your work, change your job, or get next to someone who is passionate about his or her work. It can be contagious. The key is to match your passion for the work to the subject and problem, with a clear vision of what needs to be done. Most scientists are not visionary. You must be visionary about your work. You must think about the work that most needs to be done, regardless of your stature in your organization. Don't spend your life as a worker bee. You must see the larger picture of your work and the impact it could have.

So, be passionate about your work. Work on something that really matters. Have a vision for your work before you begin, and then sharpen your vision along the way.

Passion + Relevance + Vision =  
Making a Difference Through Research

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