REVERSE RUNNING
commentary

JOE FUGATE WONDERS ABOUT OPS FOR THE REST OF US …

★★★★★
RATE THIS ARTICLE

RECENTLY, AN MRH READER POSTED THIS ON THE MRH FORUM:

"I am building a very small layout, so I don't need or want anything too complicated. I bought the OPSig's book and that was way over my head, so I sold it."

This is a concern: it suggests there is a huge disconnect between fans of ops (such as the OPSig) and the general modeler. By ops, I mean having a specific process for moving cars and trains from place to place.

We're currently conducting our 2018 Reader Survey, and early responses to our "how do you prefer to run trains?" question shed further light on how people like to run their trains:

▶ **STEPPING OUTSIDE THE BOX WITH A CONTRARY VIEW**

Roundy-roundy or just running trains to railfan is fine 19.3%
Simple but realistic ops with no paperwork (Mother-may-I) 55.0%
Track warrants, radios, and a dispatcher 8.0%
CTC system with signals and a dispatcher 8.3%
Timetable and train order with a dispatcher 9.4%

Notice the whopping percentage who likes realistic ops but want to keep it simple? The survey has many comments like the following:

"Mostly roundy round at the moment, but trying to slowly incorporate simple but realistic ops. Some good articles would help; simple ops for one or two engineers."

I love the new Op SIG Operations Compendium book [opsig.org/OPSigBook2.pdf] but I fear it mostly preaches to the choir. A newbie's tutorial it is *not*.

As I discuss operations with modelers-at-large, ops gets a big thumbs down from more than a few modelers, and it's something of a hobby industry "dirty little secret" that ops stuff *doesn't sell*.

Whenever we run a serious ops article, it generally gets poor ratings and negative comments.

I'm a prototype ops guy myself. As I look at how we realistic ops fans have spread the word, it looks like a total fail, frankly.

Anecdotes abound about folks being thrown in the deep end of complex operations and stressing out. They get buried in ops minutiae and are just turned off.

It's time for us ops fanboys to do some soul-searching and work out a way to truly help modelers wanting to take a first step into realistic operation by keeping things ultra simple. The all-or-nothing approach to introducing modelers to realistic ops is a bust.

Once they get used to simple ops and want more, then we can show them more. How about it, realistic ops fans? ☑