It is not uncommon for stereotypes to be repeated long after they are no longer valid and to be considered received wisdom even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

This also applies to AFPM conferences, which are often pigeonholed as being relevant only for a limited audience or focusing on a single topic even after their programs have evolved along with the industry into something completely different (take a look at the Plant Automation & Decision Support conference for a good example of this). Oh, the number of times that I have heard members refer to the Annual Meeting as “the refiners’ meeting”.

Not so. While the Annual Meeting program does have plenty of sessions that dwell on technologies specific to petroleum refining, half of the program sessions address process safety, operational improvements, environmental challenges, reliability, and business issues that are relevant for hydrocarbon processes of all kinds. AFPM’s petrochemical members share many of the same operational issues as petroleum refiners so many of the Annual Meeting technical sessions are relevant for both industry segments. The sessions listed below will feature technologies that can benefit both petrochemical producers and petroleum refiners:

- Petrochemicals – The feedstock and product overlap between petrochemicals and petroleum refining can produce synergies between the two industry segments and opportunities for optimized operations.
- Process Safety – Mechanical integrity, operational excellence, managing risk, and investigating incidents are core concerns in all hydrocarbon process facilities.
- Environmental – All facilities must obtain permits, control emissions, and comply with EPA rules and limits.
- Plant Automation – The operation and optimization of petrochemicals and petroleum refining assets can benefit from the application of automation technologies, IT infrastructure improvements, and enhanced protection from cybersecurity threats.
- Reliability – Assuring mechanical integrity, the management of assets and the maximization of plant utilization are critical activities in process plants.
- Turnarounds - Turnarounds are essential to plant operations and the optimization of turnaround scope and execution can have a significant effect on plant reliability and profitability for both petrochemicals and petroleum refining.
- Water Issues - Process plants can’t operate without water to produce steam or absorb heat from process streams so technologies and methodologies that address water supply and usage issues, the optimization of cooling water systems, and technology improvements for treating wastewater are relevant for petrochemicals and petroleum refining.

The Annual Meeting technical program is for all of AFPM’s members.

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