Possibilities for improvement are sometimes closer than we would expect, and communication and cooperation are the tools for easy improvements.

Ensure that you know what your client really wants. It is possible that your client accepts more than you think. This provides the opportunity to use more wood than currently used. The reported requirements do not always represent the actual minimum requirements of the client. Knowing the minimum requirements and precise application of the product can give more sawing options to the mill. It happens that sawmills are focussed on producing fixed long lengths, whereas these are shortened by the buyers anyway.

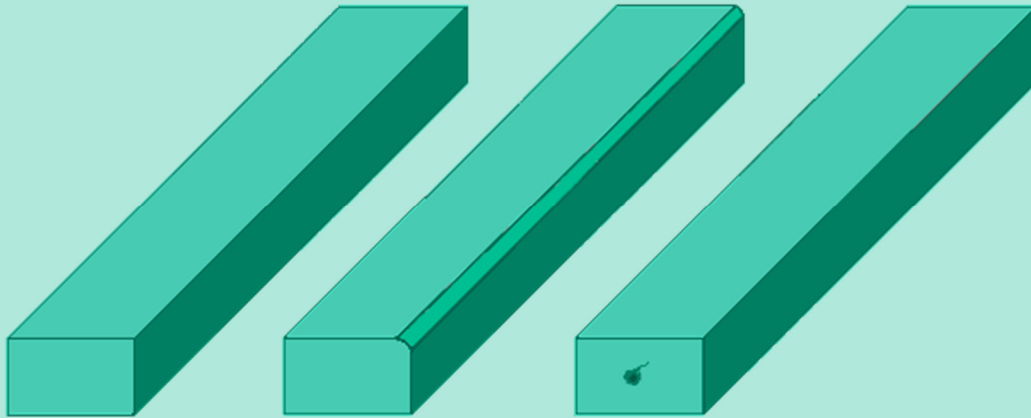*Notice the variety in lengths, which is accepted by this companies' client*

Visit of client increased the recovery rate

A client of a company based in the Congo Basin once visited this company's sawmill. The client saw how logs were sawn and which parts were rejected. He explained to the sawmill manager that some of the rejected timber would actually be accepted by him and the final client, by looking at the exact norm and tolerances for defects and sapwood. This visit has resulted in a change of timber selection and rejection with the ultimate increase of recovery rate for this species from 34% to 38%, which is an increase of more than 10% final product.
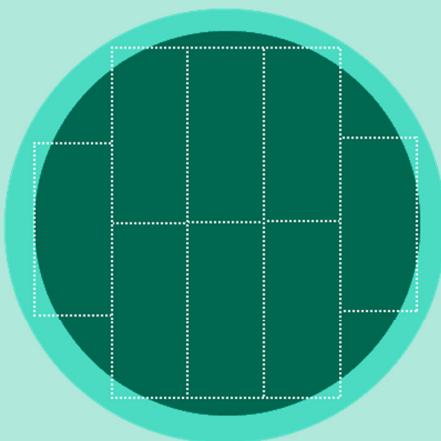
Tolerances in railway sleepers

An African based company produces railway sleepers. In the past all sleepers were sawn perfectly without any edge deficiencies. That was how they interpreted the clients' specifications. Until at a certain point they had some share of thoughts on the specification and realized that small deficiencies at the edge would be accepted for the same price. This resulted in a change of sawing the logs, resulting in a dramatic recovery rate change.
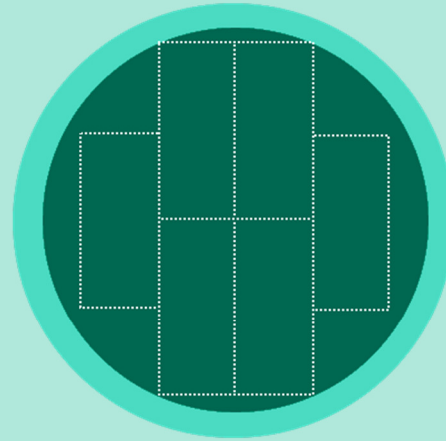

At first only the left (perfect) sleepers were exported. Whereas the other two were also accepted.

Sapwood tolerances

Is sapwood allowed by your client? If a little is allowed, this can result in a considerable difference:

Some sapwood allowed

No sapwood allowed