

Achieving Excellence in Dairying

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■ Introduction

Dairying is a set of tasks that when looked at individually, seem very simple but when put in the context of time and delivery they can be overwhelming. The dairyman who can orchestrate these tasks could run a Fortune 500 company. It is the timing and delivery of these tasks that separate the good dairyman from the excellent dairyman.

Take the simple task of checking a dry cow with her tail up in the air. A gloved exam of the birth canal finds a calf presented with a front leg back. Simply bringing the leg to the correct position allows the live birth to take place and a new lactation to start well. But if it takes more than one person to examine the cow, the task may be postponed until another person is freed up to help catch her. With time passing the fixing of the position is still simple but too late and the calf may be born dead, the cow may not clean, putting a complete lactation at risk. And if too much time passes (days) the dead calf swells and puts both the lactation and the cow's life in jeopardy.

As today's dairies expand, many of the tasks that were done by the owner are now done by employees. Making these tasks easy and enabling the employee to do the tasks alone are essential. Achieving excellence becomes a mission of motivation! With larger and larger dairies, dairymen often get lost in the details and miss how really simple a large dairy can be.

■ Three Simple Circles

Dairyman, independent of size of the dairy, still have to accomplish the same tasks and achieve the same or better results. Distilling the events and tasks down to three simple circles seems to be the simplest way to understand any dairy farm.

The first circle is a twenty-four hour circle. What happens to a milk cow in 24 hours? How many times a day is she milked, 2x or 3x? When is she milked?

How many times a day and when is she fed? Are all of the twenty-four hour circles the same or are the fresh cows milked more often than the later DIM cows? The second circle starts in the maternity pen and is a twelve-month circle. How does the cow spend the next twelve months getting back to the maternity pen? How many group changes, how many rations when she is bred the first time, pregnancy checked, dried off, etc? How many dry cow rations and when is she put back in the maternity pen? The last circle is also started in the maternity pen and involves the newborn calf. The circle is two years long and it is the journey from birth in the maternity pen back to giving birth in the same pen to start a brand new life as a dairy cow. Understanding these circles and where they can be touched or broken helps to achieve dairy excellence.

■ **Defining the Personalities of the People in the Dairy Industry**

Whether we are dairymen, veterinarians, nutritionists, or other dairy consultants, we are very similar type of people. Who are these people? Think about what they do. Think about their personalities. Understanding ourselves, and the people we work with, and for is a major step in achieving excellence. The Meyers-Briggs has a personality scale that is useful in understanding ourselves. Myers-Briggs has four major ways of classifying personality.

Introvert vs. Extrovert

I vs. E

People who own dairy cattle (greater than 80% of them) are introverts ("I"). It doesn't mean they can't function within groups. It simply means they gain their energy being alone. Introverted people like people and will go to parties, but you'll find them locked in a one-on-one conversation for perhaps the whole night. They can come to a dairy meeting and be happy to see all of you, and after it's over, they are physically and mentally exhausted. Their mental energies come from being alone. They recharge their batteries being alone. Introverts are clever because you can't always tell they're introverts. Many of them appear to be outstanding extroverts. The brighter they are, the more they've learned that the world favors extroverts. The world favors the people who are excited about things.

Amazingly, among most other dairy consultants and veterinary practitioners, you again find 80% introverts. As much as they seem to enjoy getting together at this meeting most of them are happy to get back to their rooms and gain some energy. It's interesting that dairymen and their advisors are both introverts. We have two people who don't want to talk to each other!

Extroverts gain their energy from people. They can spend all night at the party and have gained energy. Extroverts lose energy while being alone

Sensory vs. iNtuitive

S vs. N

The “S” is sensory. They see the world through their senses, through touch, through taste, through feel. They have to see it to believe it. When buying a tractor they have to see the tractor, touch the tractor, drive the tractor. Tractor dealerships don’t do well showing pictures of tractors. If you’re going to have a tractor dealership and deal with a sensory person, you can’t get out a book of tractors and show them the stats. Instead, you have to have a huge inventory so those farmers can kick tires and climb on and climb in and hear the engine. These people don’t grasp abstract ideas very well. Our profession, dairying, runs about 80% toward sensory. We also have to taste it, touch it, feel it, or kick it. Most of us learn better by touching and doing. For Veterinarians learning about surgery, they do better in wet labs doing the surgery, instead of reading about the concept of a C-section. Dairymen need to see new feeds for their cows not just read about them.

The “N” is for intuitive. These are people who grasp ideas without needing or wanting to touch or feel the thing in question. These are the people who can read a dairy article and want to go try the new idea without ever having seen it! They are the type of person who needs to understand how something works at a very basic level, like totally understanding the internal combustion engine just so they can drive a car!

Thinkers vs. Feelers

T vs. F

This is the category where decisions are made and what is used to make those decisions. Bovine owners can be thinkers or feelers. Most are thinkers. Thinkers make their decisions by using logic and are usually independent of what other people think about it. They, thinkers, don’t have to worry about how others feel about their decisions. If you’re on a cruise ship with a lot of thinkers and feelers and that cruise ship hits a rock and a hole opens in the hull, the thinkers are going to hear the announcement from the captain and they’re going to see how big the hole is to see if it can be fixed. They’re going to devise a plan to get people off the boat. The feelers, on the other hand, are going to be the ones making the announcements that call for calm and reason. They will want to know how you feel about this, whether or not it’s okay for the women to go in the lifeboats first. Society obviously needs both type of people! Dairymen and their consultants are almost 90% thinkers. You don’t have to ask them how they feel about a tractor or how they feel about a herd health program. They’re going to make their decisions based on the facts about it.

Judging vs. Perceiving

J vs. P

The “J” stands for judging. This refers to how they plan their days and order their lives.. They are very sequential people. They make lists. They order things. They order priorities. The perfect vacation for the high-functioning judging is all laid out ahead of time. They know when the plane leaves. They know where they’re going. They know what hotel they’re staying in and what restaurants they’ll eat in. They know at 10:15 a.m. they’re going to go scuba diving. A high functioning “J” writes down all his tasks for the day, makes a list of things to do. When he does something, he crosses it off and feels good about that accomplishment. If he’s done something that’s not on the list, he’ll write it on the list and then cross it off. The opposite of a “J” is a “P”, a perceiver. His idea of a perfect vacation is to head to the airport, look at the choices, and, right then, decide where to go on vacation. Most of the dairymen, vets and consultants and other people who own cattle are “Js”. They want to cross things off. They want to accomplish things. “Ps” tend to be people who are always looking for other opportunities and never want to commit to anything because there may be some better option at the last minute. These people go on a white-water raft trip down the Grand Canyon and are still looking for another river coming in or some other way to take the raft.

So what does all this mean for the ISTJs—the dairy owners and the dairy consultants?

First, personalities are like eye and hair color. Being blue-eyed is not being “right”. A personality is not an excuse for behavior, nor is it a reason for behavior. Understanding it may help you do better behavior for your dairy or dairy clients. There is not a “right” or “wrong” personality. There are sixteen options. What you are is what you are. We had some of our best dairy clients take the test. We started to see what drove them.

Average dairymen and consultant an ISTJ. They are introverts, sensory, thinkers and they are judging. The don’t want to talk to anyone, they need to see and touch to learn, they make decisions based on logic and they love order and routine!

Within a grid of who functions best with animals, self-confident introverts are who we want. If your workers, on a dairy, are self-confident introverts, they will work well alone. Try to hire self-confident introverts to work with your animals, people who like animals and gain their energy being alone, who have the self-confidence to implement your plans.

■ Our Careers

When we first started our careers, we were not very good at what we did but we liked the work a lot. Think about the first time you tried anything, being no good at it but liking it. The first LDA you ever did, you were not good at it but you liked it a lot. You were scared and excited and enthused. I often get myself in places I don't belong because I like it and I'm not good at it. Within daring, being not good at something and liking it is a fun place to be. After awhile, you get good at it and you get content and satisfied. But most of us don't spend much time being content and satisfied. I don't know what there is in the human condition that won't let you stay there. Instead, you stop liking it. You're doing what you're very good at, but you become discontent and grumpy. A lot of people call this a mid-life crisis. This is where you get a Harley.

■ Be Not Good At It

Nobody can understand why you bought the Corvette. You're grumpy and unhappy. You're not liking what you do, but you're good at it. The danger here is that if you're not happy and you don't like it, you'll stop keeping up and you'll reach the point where you're no longer good at what you do. Now you're bitter and abusive to yourself and others. You become destructive.

The object is to realize you're not liking it and make a change. We can go to "Box One" any time we want. The trouble with Box One is the risk it entails. Most of us are far in our career before we reach the point of not liking it. Once you fall into the not liking it category, it's awfully hard to go back to being not good at it. I would challenge each of you to go be not good at something in our profession. Go back to that feeling you had when you did your first LDA. Or find something else to do. A long time ago I figured out that fixing sick cows was not helping the dairymen I worked with. Within the dairy profession, I was able to learn nutrition, because I wasn't good at it. It's amazing how much fun you have when you're not good at it!

Our professions, tends to be happy in Box Two, but the danger is that you can fall into Box Three easily. My wife could see it happening in my dairy career every time I took out my fly rod. Whenever I started fly-fishing, she knew I was unhappy with something in my profession because, honestly, I will never be good at fly-fishing. I count it a good day when I, and the guide haven't been stuck with the hook. When I can fool a trout every now and then, it's an awesome day. There's always another level to trout fishing so I'm always able to get into the not good box.

	LIKES	NOT LIKE
GOOD	Content Satisfied	Grumpy Discontented
NOT GOOD	Excited Enthused	Bitter Destructive

■ The Importance of What's "Not"

We also try to explain life to our clients and employees. I get a little philosophical. I try to explain that what's NOT is more important than what IS. The way to motivate your clients, or employees, for excellence is to lead them, not push them, but pull them. I am not a golfer, but I always use golf for this example. What's important about the golf ball is it's NOT in the hole. In fact when it IS in the hole it is not important until we take it out again! We will hammer it with big clubs and little clubs, and we'll just keep smacking it until it becomes NOT important. When is it not important? When it falls into the hole. Golf is a game within a game. I usually play maybe three times a year because somebody will invite me to drink beer. If I'm with a person I know very well, who loves the game, just as that person is setting up for an important putt and he's walked around it a bazillion times, just as he goes to putt I ask, "Do you breathe in when you putt or breathe out?" There are 18 important holes, but what's really important is the score at the end. That's the bigger goal. Work at things with a big goal in mind, but lots of little goals along the way. Celebrate the little goals you achieve. Set achievable goals. Explain that what's NOT in life is more important than what IS. Because when it happens it's not important. My first to years of dairy practice I was goal less. I wanted to be a dairy practitioner and once I became one, I had no goal. Motivating clients for excellence is a matter of explaining golf to them—what's not important. At the end, it's the whole score, but there are many celebrations on many holes.

So in summary, understand yourself, your clients or employees, your own dairy circles and try to be NOT GOOD at something on the dairy to light your fire. And remember what's NOT is more important than IS!!

