

Motivating Employees

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■ Take Home Message:

This paper describes motivational techniques to focus workers to work correctly.

- ▶ Motivating workers is only a small, yet important part of the bigger picture to successful employee management.
- ▶ A motive is an inner drive that causes a person to do something or get a certain way. It can be thought of as having “a fire in your belly”.
- ▶ Managers can motivate by creating an environment where people work toward a predetermined goal; they hold a can of either gas or water to fuel the employee’s “fire in their belly”. Managers must identify goals and focus workers to work toward those goals.
- ▶ Recognition and feedback are primary motivators. Incentive programs are based upon the principles of recognition and feedback but are very tricky to implement with dairy farm employees. More money does not necessarily equate to increased motivation and productivity.
- ▶ Focusing employees on results is a key motivator when employees are properly trained and the results of their work are measured and compared to a standard or goal.
- ▶ Motivating employees “happens” when proven management principles are implemented. Dairy owners and managers can modify management principles from other industries and implement them with their dairy farm employees.

■ Introduction

Motivating employees is an important, but yet relatively small part of the bigger picture of dairy farm employee management. Historically dairy farm management focused on cow management. As dairies grow in size and cow numbers, workers are hired to do all the extra work. This evolution to larger

dairy farms requires that dairy owners and/or managers learn and apply personnel management principles to be successful.

Management principles of most successful businesses can be defined as:

- ▶ organizing work to maximize efficiency and productivity;
- ▶ training and motivating workers to implement the work systems;
- ▶ monitoring both the work systems and the workers to assure that desired results are attained.

Motivating employees appears to be a small and separate component of these management principles. In fact, it is integrally involved with all three management principles to the extent that it is impossible to motivate without organizing work, training and monitoring.

■ Operational Organization

“Who motivates whom?” is not a trivial question. The size of the dairy, number of employees and employee position determine the techniques appropriate to motivate employees. A dairy owner with two employees will use a different approach to motivate his two workers compared to the owner with 10 employees. The dairy owner with 10 milkers will motivate the parlor supervisor or head milker different than the rest of the milkers. In fact the dairy owner motivates the parlor supervisor, and then he/she in turn motivates the team of milkers.

Developing an organizational diagram for larger farms with several employees is essential in order to implement motivational techniques. The organization diagram serves three purposes:

- ▶ it clarifies the role and position of each worker on the dairy; teams are identified and the leader, the motivator, is identified,
- ▶ it permits the owner or manager to set goals for each worker or group of workers so that the level to which workers are motivated to perform are established,
- ▶ it defines the framework for a record system to measure worker performance so that results can be monitored.

Figure 1 is an example of an organizational diagram for a 500 cow dairy. Every employee's name should appear on this organizational diagram. Each team of workers is clearly identified, team leaders are appointed or are obvious by their position, and goals for results of each team can be established.

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PRINCIPLE: ORGANIZE DAIRY (OWNER)

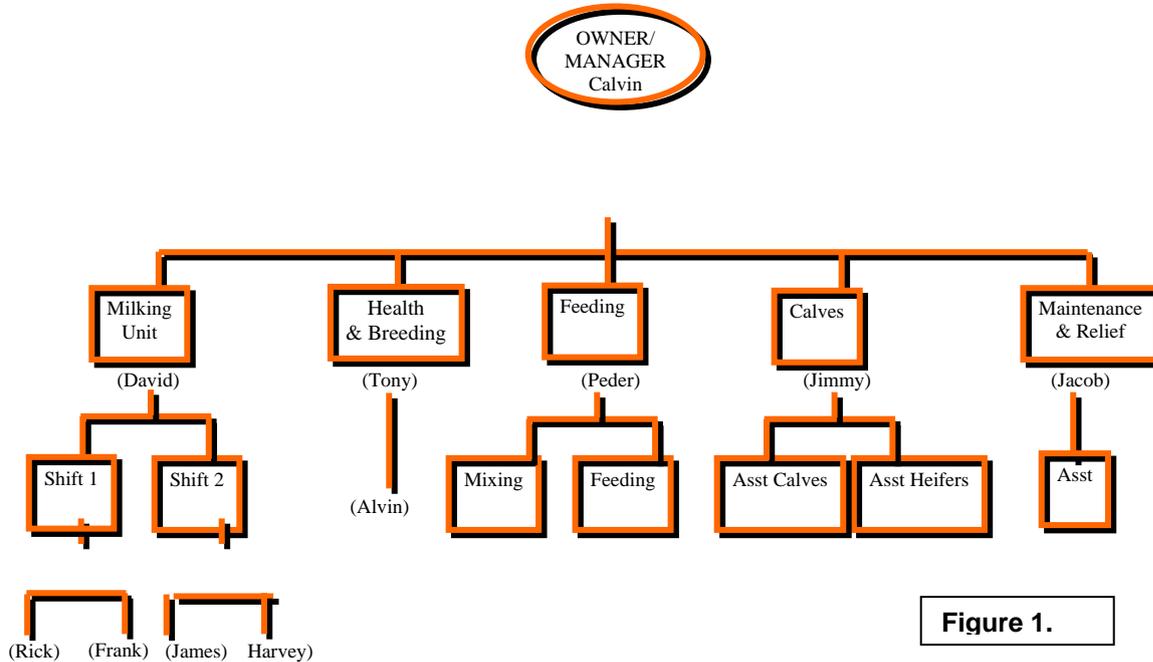


Figure 1.

Motivational techniques require some degree of interpersonal communication. Motivating individuals or groups ultimately boils down to “affecting the individual”. Astute motivators recognize that a technique to affect one individual may not be appropriate for another, very different personality. Therefore talking to workers is essential. Dairy owners accustomed to working with cows often find it difficult to take time to simply talk to their workers.

■ **Motivation Principles**

A motive is an inner drive, impulse, intention etc. that causes a person to do something or get a certain way. Simply stated, it is “fire in your belly”. Workers either have “it” or they don’t. Everyone has some motive; the most basic is to survive. Some individuals simply work for a paycheck on which to live. They have only a very basic motive. Others have a drive to do more, to excel. They have the “fire in their belly” to do more than those with only a very basic motive.

To motivate is to create an environment where people work toward a predetermined outcome. Simply, a motivator holds the can which contains either gas or water. The motivator, through interpersonal communication, determines to what extent there exists a “fire in the worker’s belly”. He/she then adds “fuel to the fire” through appropriate motivational techniques to grow it. Conversely when water is poured onto the fire, the employee is not motivated. Successful managers “fuel the fire” appropriately. Unsuccessful managers either fail to identify that a fire does not exist or incorrectly, and many times inadvertently, “pour water on the fire”. Awareness of employees’ attitudes and simply using common sense are the best indicators of when and how to fuel the fire.

■ **Uncontrollable Factors Affecting Worker Attitudes (The Worker)**

Managers influence workers to act and perform by controlling their environment and identifying their “fire”. But there exist factors that no manager can influence. Some of these include: the employee’s personal background, his/her self esteem, and previous work experience. Dairy managers do well to identify these factors in employees and accept this background history. Appropriate motivational techniques for a worker with poor self esteem, for example, may be to continually praise him when performance meets or exceeds expectations. Managers can not change the worker’s history, but they can build on their previous experience. The key, again, is communication.

■ Controllable Factors Affecting Worker Attitudes (The Workplace)

Extrinsic motivational factors that managers can control are:

- ▶ compensation and hours,
- ▶ job description,
- ▶ recognition and incentives,
- ▶ feedback, and
 - ▶ knowledge, training and skill.

A manager can modify the worker's environment by adjusting these five factors to influence the employee to move to a manager's predetermined goal.

Compensation and Hours

Employment is usually an oral contract between owner and worker. When that contract is clear, compensation for hours worked is established at the beginning of employment and usually sets the tone of the employer-employee relationship. The best measure of appropriate compensation and hours is to determine industry standards in a locale or region. Milkers, for example, are usually paid by the hour or day and there are significant differences in compensation from one region of the country to another. Herdsmen, by contrast, are usually compensated by monthly salary. Labor laws must be adhered to and compensation must be agreeably fair between the employer and worker. When these criteria are met, compensation usually is not a factor in an owner-worker relationship. Compensation is also not much of a motivating factor for the entry level employee. A classic study of factors affecting workers identified that salary and compensation ranked eighth of ten factors that influenced worker performance. Furthermore, the impact of salary on performance was as often negative as it was a positive factor.

Job Descriptions

Managers influence workers in a positive way by clarifying exactly what they are expected to do and by setting clear performance standards. Written job descriptions are the tool to clarify these points for both the manager and employee.

Job descriptions for dairy employees have three components. First, they should describe the groups of animals and number of employees (if appropriate) for which the person in this position is responsible. Second, they

should list specific responsibilities the person filling the position must perform. Finally they should list the key performance indicators and goals to which the person in this position will be held (see “Managing the Dairy Farm: Key Performance Indicators” elsewhere in these proceedings). An example of a job description for a head milker is found in Appendix A.

Recognition and Incentives

Recognition can be a powerful motivational technique; it fuels the fire of the employee that possesses strong intrinsic motive. Incentives are a form of recognition and are the proverbial “carrot” and usually take the form of financial compensation for outstanding (or sometimes just acceptable) performance. Some dairy owners and managers often and erroneously equate paying incentives with motivating employees. The following lists identify both the advantages and the disadvantages of using incentives as motivational techniques for dairy farm employees.

Positive Motivational Aspects of Incentive Programs:

- ▶ Forces managers to set goals
- ▶ Forces managers to measure performance
- ▶ Sets clear performance standards for workers
 - ▶ Rewards workers for extra work and interest

Negative Motivational Aspects of Incentive Programs:

- ▶ Can destroy teamwork.
- ▶ Can stimulate workers to find ways to “beat the system”.
- ▶ Workers get frustrated when they can’t control the circumstances that affect their bonus.
- ▶ Can send the signal that workers get paid more just to do what is expected.
- ▶ Can de-motivate workers when an extraordinary effort on the part of a worker produces poor results that are beyond the worker’s control.
- ▶ Workers that receive the bonus once come to expect it all the time.
- ▶ Dairy workers are service providers; applying incentives for service providers is more difficult than in sales industries where incentive pay is common, but where there is a direct relationship between effort and results.
 - ▶ Encourages workers to solve problems to earn the incentive but often the worker’s solution is not profitable or correct for the dairy.

Recognition is a powerful “gas to fuel the fire”, but paying incentives is a form of recognition that is tricky to implement. The majority of the employees on a dairy are entry level workers that do not have decision making input into how work is done. They often feel hostage to incentives when they don't understand or control factors affecting their compensation.

Feedback

Feedback is the number one motivator to those employees with deep intrinsic motive. It “focuses” employees because:

- ▶ The owner or manager sets goals for results.
- ▶ The owner and worker collect information to measure results.
- ▶ Workers see and identify with their efforts to get the results.
 - ▶ The communication established between owner or manager and workers through this process is positive, can create confidence, and allows managers and workers to identify problems on a timely basis; it builds teamwork.

Feedback to employees occurs at two levels: during one-on-one employer employee conversation or at group meetings where employees can participate. Middle manager meetings are essential on large dairies with many employees. These meetings should then be followed with team meetings at which each middle manager and his/her team members participate.

Training

Training is always necessary when work is organized but it is not necessary unless workers are involved. Training establishes “this is how we do it here”. Confusion or ambiguity over what a worker is to do is a management error and a common mistake that results in inadvertently “pouring water on a worker’s intrinsic fire”.

Training farm workers is most effective when they “hear it, see it and do it”. Most dairy owners train “by doing” and workers learn by example. As dairy farms expand and dairy owners and managers become further removed from cowside work, they lose the ability to train their workers by example. Owners of larger dairy enterprises with many employees need to develop training programs utilizing their off-farm consultants (e.g. veterinarians, nutritionists, and product and service providers) to assist with technical training.

Principles to train workers are well documented; these are:

- ▶ Prepare the worker.
- ▶ Tell the worker exactly what is expected and what he/she will do.
- ▶ Show the worker.
- ▶ Have the worker do the job under guidance of another.
- ▶ Summarize what the worker will do and is expected of him/her.

■ Summary

While not all workers have the same inner drive to work, owners and managers do have techniques available to influence and focus employees to work to predetermined goals. Work should be organized with results as the endpoint. Simply measuring performance against the goal and talking to workers about their results relative to the goals is sufficient gas to ignite the intrinsic fire of most workers.

Middle and upper management employees generally possess a higher or more intense intrinsic drive. These workers are motivated by challenges, incentive pay or a variety of other recognition events that can only be appropriately determined by talking with and getting to know the employee. Dairy owners with several employees must shift gears to become personnel managers as well as managers of cattle.

■ Appendix A

Example Dairy JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Head Milker:

The Head Milker manages the crew of milkers for which he/she is the leader. This position requires that one milks, trains and supervises others to attain the goals for mastitis control, number of cows milked per hour and parlor cleanliness established by the dairy manager. He/she has authority and control of milking team members including recommendations for termination of workers that do not follow identified milking procedures. He/she identifies machine malfunctions and reports these to the maintenance personnel for correction.

Specific Duties Include:

- ▶ Always arrives on time; never absent from work.
- ▶ Milks the entire shift.
- ▶ Understands, trains and monitors each member of the milking team to follow exact milking routine and procedures.
 - ▶ Ensures that the milking routine is followed which includes:
 - Each milker works in his/her territory of 6 cows.
 - Each milker presprays and forestrips teats on all cows.
 - Hand stripping is two squirts of milk from each teat.
 - Adjusting machines to correct or prevent squawking.
 - Removing machines from cows as they are done.
 - Spraying all teats after machine removal.
- ▶ Separates cows with abnormal milk.
- ▶ Makes certain that cleanliness and sanitary procedures are followed to keep milking equipment clean; supervises washup.
- ▶ Manages his/her crew so that all milk quality and time requirements are met.

Key Performance Indicators:

- ▶ SCC < 200,000
- ▶ Clinical Mastitis < 0.5%
- ▶ Standard Plate Count (SPC) < 5,000
- ▶ Start and finish on time