

Communication is the Key

By: Jay Thurman

1/1/15

As a nutrition consultant I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with many dairymen in different regions around the country. I have learned a great deal from the people I have worked with, not only about the dairy industry, but about people as well. Managing a dairy can be done successfully a number of different ways. Some of the successful managers I have worked with have been very involved in nearly all aspects of the dairy, others, also very successful, have a much different management style that relies more on middle managers to supervise daily activities.

Consulting styles are similar in the fact that there are varying consultant personalities, some very direct and to the point and others that are softer and easier to listen too. Again, there is a place for both and not "one size fits all". Each dairy seems to take on its own personality over time. Some are very personal, people oriented while others are more numbers driven and business minded. Neither is inherently right or wrong, they are just different. Finding the right blend of dairy management and consulting personality can be challenging at times. Often, operating out of our comfort zone is difficult but is the most effective way to implement positive change.

If directness is the predominant management or communication style, allowing for a more personal, gentler delivery of information can be extremely effective. People tend to get calloused and less receptive to directives if always delivered in a sharp inanimate way. Altering the delivery method of the exact same information can not only be effective but also show the people you work with, flexibility and compassion. The same can be said for those who tend to communicate in a much kinder way. The people on the receiving end of that information sometimes just want to be communicated with very directly. Reducing the confusion and focusing on the specifics that needs to be addressed.

Successfully managing people and effectively implementing change has as much to do with how the information is delivered as it does with what the actual information is. The smartest manager in the world can be wholly ineffective if he cannot communicate those ideas and directives to the people who are going to complete the tasks, in an effective way. Consultants might have innovative ideas that get ignored simply because they are unable to effectively communicate them.

One part of our job is to surround ourselves with people that we believe have the ability to accomplish the tasks set before them. Another part of our job is to recognize the most effective way to communicate with those people we need to implement those changes, even if it is not in the manner we are most comfortable communicating in. The fact of the matter is labor is very costly. Paying a consultant to provide information or hiring people to work on the dairy is only going to be worth the time and effort, if the relationship from the top down is one of good communication. If frustration, pride, or hurt feelings mitigate the institution of good information, management is responsible for correcting that shortcoming. The outcome of how that communication is handled will end up going Straight To Your Bottom Line.