

Straight to the Bottom Line – 4/1/11

By: Steve Martin

### “Building your Team”

Who are your closest advisors? As a producer in today’s complicated dairy industry, it is to your great advantage to surround yourself with a variety of professionals that serve as your board of advisors. A great comparison would be that of a football team. You as the producer are like a head coach. Every successful head coach is surrounded by top notch assistant coaches. In my analogy these assistant coaches could be represented by your team of advisors. In the case of a dairy, these advisors could include your vet, nutritionist, accountant, farm manager, environmental engineer, risk manager, etc. How hard do you as the head coach work at building this team and making sure it is working at a very high level to insure the success of the dairy.

A couple of instances recently in our consulting group demonstrate some principles related to good team building. But first, a question; “what is the basic purpose of these advisors?” Could it be that the complications of today’s dairy industry are impossible for any one person to be sufficiently competent in all areas? By surrounding yourself with experts in these various fields you will increase the chance for success. As a consultant, it is very satisfying to know that your contributions have led to the success of a business. Our group received a compliment recently that reminded us of one of our major purposes. The compliment could be summarized in the quote that working with our group “had made him a better dairyman”. What a great comment for us, but also for him. He has led his team and learned things from our group that have made a difference in his business and even in his own personal development as a professional dairy producer. There is a great team being built on that farm and the result of this team building will be the overall success of the dairy.

The second instance spoke volumes to me as well. This situation encourages me in an area in which dairy producers often score very poorly. This is the area of “long term” team building. In short, every tough problem at the dairy should not result in the replacement of one of the advisors. Dairy producers seem to have the tendency to change advisors to fix

problems. Is that really the best way to make long term improvements? Recently, I made contact with a former client after a number of years. I wanted to share with the individual some of the advances we have made in our consulting group. Even though my main purpose was the hope of rekindling some business, I was not disappointed to hear that things were going well at the dairy. They have built a good team and the result of this long term team work was a dairy that is making progress year to year. I think this dairy has it right. Long term team building leads to long term success.

So as you build your own team at your own dairy, focus on the selection of high quality team members that can help you become a better dairyman. As you grow as an overall dairy management professional, the success of your farm is sure to follow. When the dairy encounters problems, lean hard on the team, but don't be too quick to change the team. If issues seem to be too overwhelming, encourage to team to consult with other professionals to help look for solutions. Remember, no one person knows it all and every dairy needs that group of top-notch assistant coaches.