

Dr. Kraig Peel
Never Underestimate the Power of People

We all know people that intersect our lives at work and socially. I know I am guilty of occasionally overlooking the knowledge and support these people provide. Do we take the time to allow these people to share their knowledge and support with us regularly? Or are we so busy that we only call on them if we have a problem or when we need something. We need to spend more time showing appreciation and listening to these people in our lives. In a world of smartphones do we default to Google? Often, the answer may be with the person riding in the truck.

Recently I was looking at heifers for a client when the workers told me about a heifer that had symptoms that they had not encountered before. She had swollen legs but no lameness. I went to the pen and observed the heifer and took some pictures. I am well acquainted with a land grant university that has a veterinary school as well as a state of the art veterinary diagnostic lab. I was able to capture some pictures as well as video of the heifer moving in the pen. I sent the pictures and video along with a written description to some veterinarians as well as the diagnostic lab. The veterinarians are some of the best minds in the country for diagnosing animal illness.

The pictures were circulated around the country to colleagues at other universities. I immediately started getting texts and emails regarding the cause of the condition in this heifer. There were diagnoses that were severe and would require significant cost for treatment and there were diagnoses to just leave her for a week and observe. I was concerned with the condition being caused by a zoonotic organism that could be contagious. There were a few replies that were similar but I basically received many answers and most wanted me to bring the heifer somewhere for in-depth testing. By the end of the day, I did not have an answer that I was confident was a correct course of action for the heifer yard.

I was visiting another dairy the next day that has a herdsman with 30 plus years of experience with dairy cows and the management of dairies. We were discussing some issues with his dairy when I remembered my heifer dilemma. I showed him the picture and he was able to immediately diagnose the problem and he was able to share the treatment that he had successfully used in the past. I sent his diagnosis and treatment to my veterinary friends and after much discussion; they agreed that the course of treatment was plausible. We followed the herdsman's suggestion and the heifer was completely recovered in one week. I will stress that none of the veterinarians were able to see the animal in person so I grant it was a very difficult request for them to make a positive diagnosis from a picture and video without a thorough examination.

The purpose of the story is to illustrate the amazing human capital that is around us routinely. I encourage us all to take the time to talk to people and utilize the knowledge that they have to help us be better at all that we do.