

The Team

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The management structure for many businesses is cut and dry. Workers report to middle managers that in turn, report to managers that answer to a general manager or CEO. It is a well-defined chain of command with very little overlap. There are clearly delineated responsibilities and very predictable results based on output per man hour. Does this type of structure hold true in the dairy business? Is the management structure at your dairy that well defined? For some the answer is yes, others unfortunately, incorporate a much higher level of chaos. Many responsibilities fall in that gray area and accountability gets harder to assign. A team approach, with you the dairyman as the team owner, may be the best design to effectively reach maximum potential and profitability.

The dairy industry continues to evolve as do all industries. The next generation is preparing to take on more responsibility on farm. Most of the 20-somethings are more formally educated than their parents. Many have had the opportunity to observe or work in another dairy or related business in class or as an intern to broaden their scope. However, the simple fact remains that there is nothing as valuable as experience when developing people and their skill set. The ability to view the process and how it is performed is always more valuable than having heard about it or read about it.

The cold hard facts are that no one has all of the best answers for each and every situation. Finding people to surround yourself with, developing trust, gaining knowledge and building relationships with those people, becomes more important as the business grows. Cross training is also imperative to maintain continuity in the daily operation. It is unacceptable to allow a drop off in performance because the #1 person isn't in place.

I would suggest that at least 2 and preferably 3 people be adequately trained to perform every job on the dairy – including yours! It does not have to be one person that has the ability to do everything you do – but everything you do needs to be accomplished in your absence. There is no doubt that many organizations struggle with this very issue. The mentality of many dairymen seems to be however, that there just isn't enough time to get somebody else trained. Sometimes, it is the managers that are put in place that do not want anyone else knowing what - out of a sense of job security. A good exercise might be to ask yourself: "If got hit by a bus tomorrow, who would do his/her job?" +

"Can we do everything that they were doing without a major interruption?"

There are many professionals, peers, and associates that can be a very valuable resources for your business. Obviously, not all the information you get is perfect, but drawing on the experience and knowledge of others sometimes allows you not to have to reinvent the wheel. No matter how good the offense is, if you don't have a defense you're not going to win – you need to have a complete TEAM in place. Training and preparation don't always make you money – but they certainly have the ability to keep you from losing money when challenging circumstances happen – and they will – and that will go Straight To Your Bottom Line.