

Learning To Manage People Is A Leap Forward For Dairies

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Learning to manage people is a process that takes time and practice, but it's best to spend that time practicing techniques that are proven and will work when mastered. The trial and error approach to human resource management leads to years of disappointment, family strife, and high employee turnover rates. Managers who first learn the principles of effective human resource management take a giant leap toward business success.

Brian Craig, dairy manager at Murmac Farms in Centre County, took his giant leap forward by attending Penn State Dairy Alliance's course Management Essentials for Dairy Success (MEDS).

It was in this course that Craig says he found himself as a manager.

"I learned certain techniques that I could use to become more effective with people," he said. He uses those techniques to better understand the twelve people he supervises. The result is a positive work environment where he can better communicate with his people and help them to improve at their jobs.

Craig goes on to say, "I've learned not to be a hard charger all the time. I take an interest in my people and show that I care about them as individuals."

Two of the key concepts that MEDS teaches are organization and delegation. Many dairy managers struggle to assign responsibility to others because they are uncertain of the worker's ability. They find it difficult to move away from the role of hands-on worker to the role of coach and supervisor. When managers retain a strictly hands-on style, they prevent others from developing into their true potential.

MEDS teaches managers how to create work conditions that lead to improved performance. Participants learn about obstacles to performance and how to remove them. The objective is to help managers grow and develop in their supervisory role, so that they in turn can help their people to develop.

Craig applied these concepts to his own management responsibilities at Murmac Farms. His responsibilities include herd health, cow comfort, housing, parlor operations, and milk quality control.

"I've better organized myself and the people I'm responsible for," he said. "I try not to get tied up with any one individual during the day. I delegate responsibility and encourage people to take the initiative and achieve. We are all more productive and satisfied because I let my people take an active role in getting

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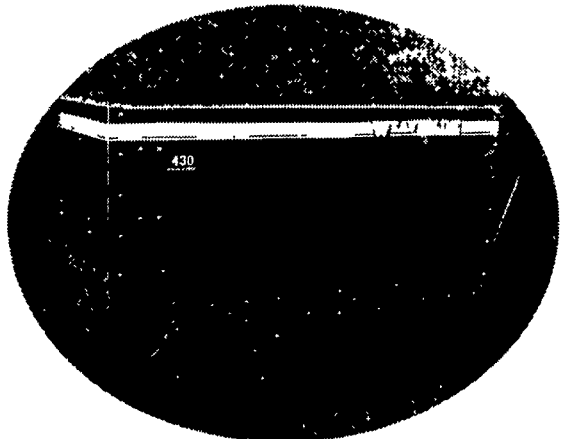
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