



BeefTalk 739: Change, It's in Your Mind

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Establishing the Right "Mindset"

- If we do not want to be in class, the challenge begins.
- If we do not want to learn, the challenge increases.
- If we do not want to experience change, the challenge becomes more unsurmountable

The needs of today's cattle industry are not the same as yesteryear's needs.

I could not help noticing Whit Hibbard's article, It's All About Mindset, that popped up on the Drovers CattleNetwork. The article talked about low-stress livestock handling. The article quoted Bud Williams, who noted that to establish the principles of low-stress livestock handling, one must have the correct mindset.

Whit certainly pointed out the low-stress concept and also told us that we really need to think about what the term "mindset" means. The article gets us thinking about low-stress livestock handling and how important the concept is within beef cattle operations.

In a broader sense, I could not help thinking about how that mindset term floats around the beef industry. Fall is the time

for class, at least for young minds who arrive at schools and look forward to a year of learning.

With time spent teaching, one comes to appreciate the term mindset very quickly. As the students file into class, there is this feeling, as an instructor, on how the day will go. Actually, after several classes, instructors begin to get a feel for how the semester will go. That feeling is a direct response to the mindset of the students.

The overall experiences, joys and frustrations of teaching depend on the correct mindset within individual students, as well as the whole class. There is no question that the instructor has the capacity to enhance or constrain student mindsets, but the overriding factor is the mindset of the students.

If they do not want to be in class, the challenge begins. If they do not want to learn, the challenge increases. If they do not want to experience change, the challenge becomes more insurmountable.

Perhaps moving more toward an open mindset versus a closed mindset is the goal. However, it is not fair to just pick on students because the world of educators and academics also can get caught in the same trap.



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How many times should one say: Do we not already know that? However, those with advanced degrees struggle as well in the effort the crack open minds that then can ask new questions. It would be even better if those minds could take those new questions and answers and apply them to an industry that may or may not want the answer.

I wish I could write down the number of times I have heard someone say: "Those darn academics just don't live in the real world!" I added the exclamation point because sometimes the quote is made rather strongly. The quote is sometimes true and sometimes not.

Now back to the original point. As Whit pointed out, the right mindset is critical to moving forward with an evaluation of any particular beef program, operation, students, teachers and even producers. However, why point this out today?

The Dickinson Research Extension Center has to re-evaluate the cow herd. Ever-occurring change surrounds the center. As the land that has had a long-standing agricultural use is absorbed in urban spread or impacted by the energy industry, the center needs to become more focused and more intense in terms of programs that are offered. It means the center's mindset needs to be broadened.

A human trait is to resist change. The general logic behind the resistance is the acknowledgment that what is being done presently is the best. Unfortunately, the present is generally evaluated by those who are there, so the evaluation certainly is biased towards the idea that "if it's not broke, don't fix it." Sounds like a mindset clog.

The bottom line is that the world is changing and the center needs to change with it. The needs of today's cattle industry are not the same as yesteryear's needs. Granted, much that we do does not change, but as we add knowledge, just like the students we are trying to educate, we need to sit up and listen.

Whit's article was on the principles of low-stress livestock handling and establishing the correct mindset for evaluation and change. The same can be said for cattle performance and fitting cattle to the environment.

Modern genomics are just beginning to creep into the industry. Some would say the world of genetics is a dynamic change button in any world. The knowledge that is being revealed will challenge the mind. The tendency to move forward or backward will depend on how open one is to trying to implement this knowledge within managerial structures.

The answers are not set and the questions start with us looking at our own mindset. If we do not want to be in class, the challenge begins. If we do not want to learn, the challenge increases. If we do not want to experience change, the challenge becomes more insurmountable. However, change is coming.

May you find all your ear tags.

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