

# BeefTalk: The Challenge of Managing Human Resources

**Having the right team is critical to the success of the cattle operation.**

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A major challenge to beef production today is finding the right labor force with training, knowledge and common sense.

Factors such as pay, time and place are important, and, yes, the beef production business has lots of discussable points. But the bottom line is this: Having the right team is critical to the success of the day's desired outcomes.

Managers are challenged every day to interact and engage with those who work for them to meet the day's predetermined goal. Cattle operations do not often have human resource departments to assist with finding the right team members. That task generally is relegated to the manager.

I am not an expert, but allow me to share some "in-the-field" management training perceptions. One key is being positive: What can we do, not what we can't do.

Of paramount importance is management presence, which is necessary in serving and assisting the team. Managers need to be present, displaying consistent, predictable actions that make those they supervise relaxed and comfortable.

Jumping through hoops, opening opportunities in situations that seem stagnant, shifting excessive burdens or simply adding words of encouragement to move forward allows growth. People prefer consistent, predictable expectations within their daily life, at work and at home.

Another important factor is risk. Employees need an assurance that if they take a risk, they still have a supportive network behind them. Growth requires risk.

However, I believe people can become too complacent. A manager must know when congratulatory, appreciative praise is appropriate versus the occasional tap indicative of decreasing or mediocre work performance. I believe all people have the capacity to excel in their job within their own capacity to perform.

As a manager, appropriate acknowledgment must occur, regardless of perceived job importance or ranking. Productive efforts will succeed quicker from a strong, broad base within a well-focused team. Acknowledging the base is critical.

I believe not all people are congenial toward co-workers. Invariably, a negative person-to-person interaction within the work environment arises. The manager must understand how these relationships develop and why the situation persists, and take the appropriate action, which could mean seeking outside advice and professional help.

I also believe that managers:

## Images



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- Must be prepared to deal with crises, which occur even with excellent managerial processes - An appropriate assessment, evaluation and implementation of a response plan must occur with timely decisions and follow-up. All crises eventually must lead to preventive programs when feasible.
- Are leaders who listen, evaluate and respond - Managers must maintain an adequate working knowledge of the disciplines they supervise to redirect or re-inspire employees successfully.
- Must be fiscally savvy - The world still functions on money and, without money, even the best ideas wither. Appropriate fiscal management teams must be developed and utilized to assure a broad-based, thorough review of all aspects of management.
- Must be a reflection on what life means and how we live - We each have an obligation for the future and are called to look for hope and inspiration. Leadership allows a self-determining planning process to focus on what we truly seek, which is a future that does not jeopardize future generations.
- Are challenged to use present resources to move forward and opportunistically impact the future through leadership and service - Preparation and consensus-building within the many choices are critical. Managers need to look to the future and give witness to the determination of a successful future.
- Need to challenge conventional thinking - A new consensus can turn the fork in the road into multiple options that enrich our spirituality, create viable communities and sustain individual lifestyles within various environments.

In summary, following lessons learned in biosecurity and crisis management, one person can hold only seven balls; the eighth ball always will fall to the ground. Management is no different; I can only do so much.

The key to success is knowing when someone is handing you the eighth ball. Oftentimes, as a manager, the response is, "I will do it myself!" Unfortunately, such a response only results in a tired manager at the end of the day and a less responsive team tomorrow.

The bottom line: People are people. People do not come with a set of instructions, yet their capacity to learn is exponential. Harnessing that goodness for the betterment of the whole is the heart of every good manager. And remember, yes, the cows are important, but people come first.

May you find all your ear tags.

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