

How I Motivate and Communicate with Clients in My Practice

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It's a pleasure to talk about communication, and sometimes we get involved and forget how hard it is to communicate and say the wrong things. I travel quite a bit as most of you know. When my kids were small when I would be gone, they would quite often sleep with Momma. Well one time while I was gone, they got in bed with Momma and got to arguing and finally she said, "OK, neither one of ya's gonna sleep in here tonight. Go sleep in your own bed." the next day they picked me up at the airport. As I walk off the plane, the kids come running down the concourse there and one says, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, nobody slept with Momma this time while you were gone!" Well, that's communication!

When I look at communication in the food animal industry, I am reminded that sometime ago, in 1976, two sociologists named Bryant and Snoozick wrote, "the food animal practitioner faces, at best, a frustrated owner who is concerned about profit margin and, at worst, a hostile individual who may even perceive economic exploitation. The owner often believes himself wise in the ways of animal illness and infirmity and may monitor the veterinarian's treatment with critical scrutiny and, on occasion, may even find fault with what is, perhaps, the most appropriate treatment." You know we've all got some clients like that, right? Some of these guys that could mess up anything. They could mess up a one car funeral, among other things. That kind of client. Thus, the food animal practitioner sometimes must play a kind of defensive professional role in which a considerable amount of interactional strain exists. Did you know that 70 to 80 percent of the people in agriculture are introverts? That's one of the reasons we have such a challenge in communicating from time to time. These two fellows also wrote that a profession requires three things to function: cruciality, mystique, and the power of intimidation. Well as a food animal practitioner, let's take a look at these.

Cruciality. As much as we would all like to believe it, how many of you think that we are absolutely necessary to the food animal industry that we serve? Certainly none of us. Surely, the animals that we doctor are economic objects. Their life is not crucial to the life or survival of their owner.

Mystique. That usually comes from work that appears to be esoteric, difficult, or sometimes the layman cannot do. Most of the things that most of us do, there's very little mystique in it. Oh, sure when we're in there palpating that cow and the guys standing there thinks, "What's he doing in there? How does he know she's bred 35 and not 38 days?" A little bit of mystique, but essentially not much left. Oh,

embryo transfer and some of those things. So that puts a little more of a stress on our position.

The third thing, that being the power of *intimidation*. Did you ever try to intimidate a man who had a net worth of 10 to 20 million dollars?

So what do we have left? By what authority do we function? Well, let's look at the areas of authority then. One being *competence*. Certainly we are competent. We are well trained in some of the finest institutions (Although, Bob, I do agree they do have some of their problems from time to time) of the higher learning in the world. We certainly should be competent. The authority of position. Our peers that preceded us certainly have established a position for us and we enjoy that.

Now we get to the two real tough ones—that of *personality* and of *character*. Communication boils down usually to a matter of communicating one on one. For God so loved the world, he did not send a committee, right?

This brings me to the point of trying to answer, "How do I communicate with my clients in my practice?" and that's very difficult to answer. I don't really know. I guess through the years I have watched many people like my dad, who was an extremely successful communicator, people like Jim Tappin, whom some of you will meet, people like clients of mine named Preston Powell. And one of the most common things that I see in these people is that they did it one on one, not by a committee. You know a committee's a group of the unwilling appointed by the unable to do the unnecessary for the ungrateful. Committees of ten work now and then. Committees of five are occasionally alive. Committees of two kind of get something to do, but to get something done it takes a committee of one. And that's what communication is all about—one to one, you to me. When you communicate with that client, that's what it's all about. Now the most common thread that I see moving through the relationships of the successful communicators I have known is that they all believe and practice the fact that everybody wants to be somebody. All of us want to be somebody. Like Bob said, "The worst person you can think of at this moment has some value." You can always use him as a bad example. Will Rogers once said, "We're all ignorant in some areas, just different areas." I'd like to turn that around, We're all good at something, every one of us has something that we can do good. One of the challenges in life is to find out what that is. I don't remember the lady's name, but the oldest person to ever serve actively in the military was a female admiral who designed all the computer programs in the navy. It took special acts of Congress to keep her in service until she was

82 or 83 years old. Extremely sharp lady. Someone asked her one day, "How do you manage people?" She said, "You don't. You manage things and you lead people." And that's what it's all about—you manage things and you lead people.

I was pleased to hear Bob Henry talk about negative things. That's not the way we get things done. That's not the way we motivate people. We talk about the positive things. I like to be constantly on the look out for things done almost right. You know, everyone of us is different and to get that job done right in your estimation may be a little different from that person out there on that farm. Look for things done almost right and then compliment them. You did a good job. When corrections must be made, criticize the act, not the person and in private, if at all possible. No insult hurts more than that of implied inferiority. No cut or wound can penetrate so deeply. Enjoy and encourage competition among the people you work with. It's human nature. We all like to compete. We all like the action and to compete against each other.

I am reminded of the story that Dale Carnegie related in his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* about a steel mill that Charles Swab had charge of. As I understand it, Mr. Swab was talking to one of his supervisors. Wondering why they couldn't get more done the supervisor said, "I don't know, maybe it's sorry people. Don't know what it is." As I understand it Charles Swab took a piece of chalk and walked into the entrance of that factory and in

chalk on the floor wrote (after talking to the supervisor and discovering that last night they had completed six firings in this plant) the number six on the floor. The next shift came in. "What's this?" "Well, the shift just before you got six batches run through." At the end of the next shift, somebody had scrubbed the six out and written a seven. This continued from one shift to the next until the number 10 was written. So what did he do? Just simply through competition increased the output by 40 percent. Same people, same effort. In the final analysis, the art of people leadership amounts to being kind.

Like the true Southern Baptist that I am also, any good sermon needs three points and a poem, right? So here's mine:

So many Gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind
What all this weary, sad world needs
Is just the art of being kind.

Any fool can make another person unhappy, it's the rare person who has developed the talent, as we have heard this morning, of making people happy. I see people every day who are starving for a word from someone they respect and admire, "I'm proud of you. You're doing fine. I need you." Simple words, but sometimes so hard to say.

Transcribed from a tape recording of Dr. J. A. Jarrett's presentation.

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It all started last year at the national mastitis council meeting. Dr. Dave McClary approached me and proceeded with the most peculiar conversation. He said over the years he'd gotten to know a lot of veterinarians, some as students and some as practitioners. And he said...it went something like this: "I've seen students and practitioners who have worlds of knowledge, great skills, who never become successful practitioners." He said, "On the other hand, I've met veterinarians who know hardly anything at all and have become great successes." He said, "I think the key difference is communication skills." I nodded my head and he said, "We're organizing a seminar at Phoenix. We're trying to assemble a group of practitioners out of the latter group." Then he said, "Ken, I've always admired your ability to talk." I ignored him and then...but the program shows up and here we are in the program. Anyway ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased and honored to be here on a blue ribbon panel of practitioners who know next to nothing at all and are willing to stand up and be recognized!

We're talking about communication, motivation, in essence we're talking about change. We're talking about giving life to ideas, making them so clear and compelling that they can not be ignored. As it's been said this morning, it requires—I think it's launched with—enthusiasm and optimism. I think all of us are familiar with optimists and pessimists defined in terms of that half glass of water. The optimist sees the glass as half full and the pessimist says it's half empty. I think it may be more telling in terms of optimism and pessimism: An optimist is a person who believes that right now is a great opportunity—this moment is the best of times. The pessimist fears that this is true.

I think we need to begin programs or ideas with great confidence and part of that comes from how we see ourselves. I am personally involved in dairy production programs. I have a friend, the county agent, who sees me once in a while and comes up to me. County agents like to feel that they have their fingers, their thumb, on the pulse—the agricultural pulse—of their county. He'll come up to me