

3. monitor performance
4. reaction strategy

Goal setting is the result of the owner and veterinarian determining a specific objective for each area of the dairy. Specificity is essential (22,000 lb rolling herd average is too general even though it is the overall objective; 50% first service conception rate, 2% calf mortality, 150,000 SCC are specific goals in each area in the total operation). Once established, the goals must be understood and accepted by individual staff members responsible for an area or program.

Technical and instructional support must then be provided for staff personnel so that they become capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of their job. Here the veterinarian (at the owner's discretion) interacts one-on-one with staff personnel. Individuals respond best when they know not only *what* to do, but *why* also.

Monitoring individual performance is crucial. This implies a record system which allows for efficient information input and equally efficient analysis of performance stand-

ards for each area for which a goal was established. The individual staff person is much more aware of his responsibilities and performance when he is involved with the owner and veterinarian in record analysis. Performance needs to be compared against a comparable standard.

Reaction strategy occurs at both the level of manager and farm staff. Initially the owner must judge performance as acceptable or not. That judgment must then be passed to the individual staff member. Response to negative performance must be immediate, specific, definite and reaffirmed with positive feeling. Response to positive performance is essential, but often not acknowledged. It is perhaps the greatest contributor to "complacency."

"Management causes problems by failure to recognize the need to establish clear requirements, and it perpetuates those problems by not setting and maintaining a clear performance standard" (from: *"Quest for Quality"* by Philip Crosby).

## How I Motivate and Communicate with Clients in My Practice

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You know I must be one of the luckiest people that I've ever known. I'll tell you a lot of reasons why. I have my health. I'm pleased to do the profession that I was trained to do, and I find it a very exciting time to be in veterinary medicine and to be in beef cattle practice. When I hear people speak and see what people like JoAnne Smith have done for our industry and I see what Wes Bonner is doing for our industry, I am excited to be in beef cattle practice.

When I look at what I learned in school, histology, parasitology, small animal medicine and surgery, it seems to be greatly different from what I do on a daily basis. I was completely unprepared for meeting a manager with a Ph.D. in nutrition asking about net energy values of gain, but he taught me and we learned together. Another one asked me, "How long is it going to take me to train this one?" These are all character building questions, I think. I should have more character than I know what to do with by now. When we look at our practice, we work from a service standpoint. Less than 2% of our gross income comes from drug sales or equipment sales, so we are selling our knowledge. That is the only thing we have to sell. If we are not able to communicate that properly so that it can get across, there's no way that we can be successful today or tomorrow. When we talk about communication and motivation, we have to talk about them as one and the same, because I don't think that you can communicate without necessarily motivating and vice-versa. So let's use a new term here as we finish up and call it

"communication."

If we look at some of the types of people that I work with and try to motivate and communicate with, I break the difficult people down into four groups. They are motivating the unmotivated, motivating the skeptical, motivating the superagreeable, and motivating the over-achiever. I think by doing this I have classified that person so that I may be able to discuss with them on terms that both of us can relate to. I have listed about seven rules of communication that we use on a daily basis and I want to share those with you. I have just one prime objective when I get through with this short discussion. That is I want to show you some communication rules that we use, outline how they're utilized on a daily basis, and then let you decide how they may be helpful to you.

*Initial impression.* We as a profession have an image problem. Beef cattle owners see us as a negative aspect of their operation, as an economic drain. I don't agree with that. I think that veterinarians can economically impact any operation that they are given the opportunity to do so. We have to take a stance of a more professional image, to be perceived not as a cowboy, but as a veterinary scientist. Now, you must be perceived as a veterinary scientist to the manager in management, but also as a veterinary scientist to the cowboys without making them feel they are inferior. I have at least a dozen cowboys that work for me that probably forgot more about doctoring cattle than I'll ever

know. That's a humbling experience. Non-verbal communication is probably one of the most important things that we forget, especially with initial impression. How we approach that person, how we extend that hand, the language of business is very, very important. I think it is important that we are good listeners. How can you communicate if you don't listen to what they're saying? That's a hard lesson to learn for someone that has so much to say. I think it's important that we do as much follow up as possible. Follow up in areas that necessarily haven't been followed up with in the past: written reports, standardized programs, standardized approaches. All of these are extremely important when we look at forming that initial impression and that impression of how they perceive you.

The second rule of communication that we use is that we've got to *form a team*, not the "I" team, but the "we" team, cowboys and management professionals working together. If we don't have that team and you don't form that cohesive, "superglue" if you will, then as a professional giving advice they're not going to necessarily be so open and receptive. We've heard the discussion this morning, with this wonderful panel about making people feel important. You know, as I get through and get a little bit older and a little bit wiser, I hope, I've developed a major goal in my career and with my clients. One of many. That major goal is to make people better because I was there and to be there. That's such a simple goal to say and such a hard goal to achieve. Nothing is more important to me than making these people that I work with better individuals because I was there. To make them feel important.

Third rule. *Make it easy*. Communication is an easy science to read. It's an easy science to learn. But the art form is very difficult. You can say "good" ten different ways. But how and when you say "good" is the most important thing. Your communication skills have to be developed to work at different levels. Now I mentioned this earlier. Working with the cowboy crews, owners, management, Ph.D., and other educated people, be prepared. When I go in to a new client, I tell him what we can do. One of the most sophisticated beef cattle operations or industry associations in the world had limited veterinary experience. That's changed and that's exciting.

The fourth rule of communication is *repeat, repeat, repeat*. If at first you don't get it across, repeat it again and keep doing it until you do. You have to. There's no way that they can absorb everything that you are trying to say at one time.

The fifth rule of communication is *setting goals*. We've heard about goals. I think Tom's discussion was excellent on setting goals. You heard Mr. Henry talk this morning about how they should be practical, obtainable, and realistic. Buck Rogers, who had once directed the personnel management teams at IBM, said that 75 to 80 percent of all goals should be obtainable. If you are trying to expect 100% obtainability, you're wrong. You have to have little wins and you are going to have little losses. You hope in the end you have one big win. Those goals need to have specific objectives, i.e. how the

veterinarian is going to work with you and how you're going to work with the veterinarian. It's extremely important to set the goals, set the plan, and then work the plan. Sounds easy doesn't it? I wish it were.

The sixth rule. *Written follow up*. We work our poor word processor to death trying to follow up everything that we have done on a daily or weekly basis. We have now just decided to spend the money and go ahead and do monthly comparisons and follow ups so that we can use our computer skills even more to show these people, our clients, where they are—compared to other clients of ours, compared to the industry. It's amazing how productive and positive a yard stick can be if used properly or how negative and self-defeating if it is used on the negative.

The seventh rule of communication is *read*. I counted up the other day as I was walking out of the office that we get over 45 journals a month in our little office. We have one full room just for reading. It's not the bathroom although that's a good idea. Roughly 20 percent of those relate to sociological, psychological people interaction skills type journals or discussions. Not all of them relate to veterinary medicine. We try to lead a balanced life in our practice and that balance includes communications skills and people skills. Eighty percent of what I do relates not to veterinary medicine directly, but to people. People are the key. If you forget that rule, you're bound for failure. We as veterinarians often are forced to work from negatives. As a feedyard veterinarian, I understand that, because you are working from preventing one major thing, that is death loss to beef cattle in production operations. That's very negative. Death is not a positive subject, but it can be made to be positive if you use it properly. Do not call up and say, "How many deaths did we have today?" but say, "Boy our death loss is improving. Look at it improve." We insist on looking at 1 percent death losses rather than 99 percent livabilities. Think about that. Calves are shipped from God-knows-where into Amarillo, Texas, and we saved on the average at the Texas cattle feeder operations last year 99.3 percent of them. That is outstanding, and it keeps improving.

In conclusion, I'd like to leave you with two thoughts, one that my father gave me when I was graduating from school and another that my partner, my mentor Dr. Bechtol, gave me. He said, "Treat a problem as an opportunity." Erase your fear of failure and treat that problem as it's an opportunity to learn and to improve not only yourself, but other people. Take that problem and turn it into an opportunity, not just empty words. Put it into practice. Second conclusion, take time to dream. How are you going to improve and move forward if you stay with your feet planted firmly on the ground? I think Dee has a neat example. He says he walks three feet off the ground. He has to duck when he goes through a door and he's only 6 feet. **Take time to dream. By doing that, you're going to improve not only yourself, but your practice and hopefully the veterinary profession.**

*Transcribed from a tape recording of Dr. Jordan's presentation.*