

# DAIRY EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES ON IMPROVING WORK ENVIRONMENTS

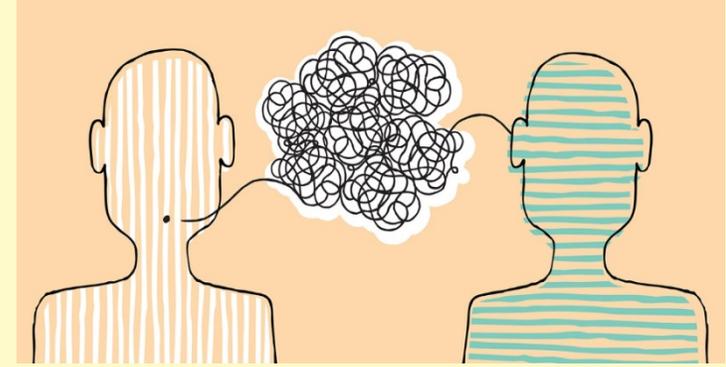
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# Presentation Objectives



- Identify employee management issues on dairy farms
- Examine desired improvements from the perspective of employees
  - *Review differences between English- and Spanish-Speaking Employees*
- Summarize Issues

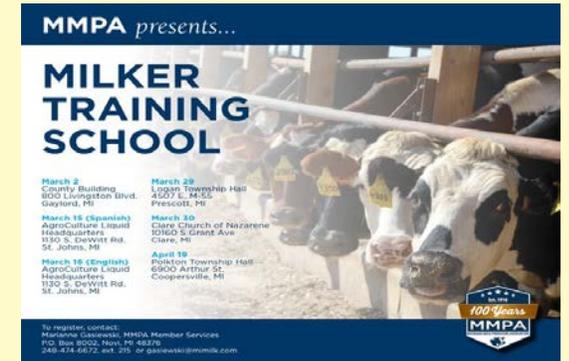
# Sources of Employee Knowledge

- More experienced co-workers
- Drug company representative's training videos
  - These are not always in Spanish: may not be accessible to all employees
- Dairy Farm Training Consultants
- Veterinarians
- Sporadically held staff meetings
- English-speaking employees rely on the knowledge gained from growing up in farming families



# Current Employee Training

- Training methods vary depending on farm size, structure, and affiliation
- Training is usually informal
- Managers typically rely on more experienced employees as trainers
  - Training often consists of “shadowing” a more experienced co-worker
  - Owners/managers feel they do not have enough time to train new hires themselves
- Some farms rely on a “Milker Training School” for formal training



# Current Barriers to Training

- Few points of contact between employees on different shifts
- Language barriers are present with Spanish-speaking employees
  - Translator/interpreter almost always necessary
  - When asked directly employees tend to downplay communication barriers
- Different cultural understandings of respectful communication



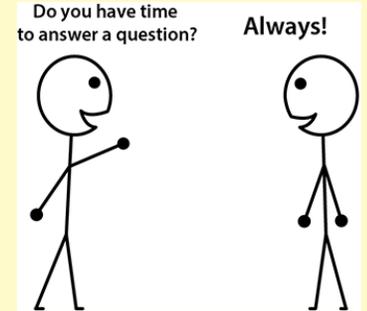
# What Employees Want



- Employees want confirmation that their job performance meets expectations
  - Recognition from supervisors and owners that they are doing their job well
    - Most often employees only see owners and supervisors to be scolded
- More frequent staff meetings and to be informed in the goings-on of the farm
  - Employees typically decide within the first six months of working whether to stay on
    - Early and continued inclusion develops a sense of belonging and of community
  - Spanish-speaking employees prefer more contact across shifts

# What Employees Want cont'd

- The opportunity to voice their concerns or disagreements to the manager/owner
- The opportunity to move into higher positions
  - Reasons behind the promotion of other employees
  - Opportunity for training in additional areas
- English-speaking employees desire a comprehensive milking protocol
  - Easier to determine the correct way of doing a task if it is laid out as a SOP



# What Employees Want cont'd

- Training performed in employees' native language
  - Language barriers present opportunities for miscommunication
- Small group discussions about work matters
  - Such as between milkers and their manager
- Interactive two-way communications
  - The ability to ask questions without fear of repercussions
  - Employee instructions without scolding

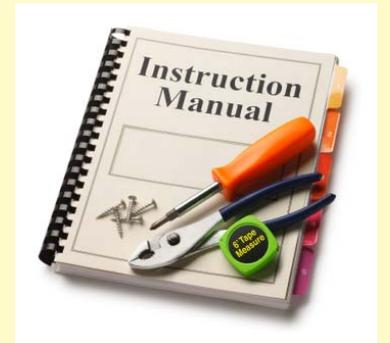


# What Employees Want cont'd



- **Visual aids and examples that are accessible**
  - Training videos and tutorials in both English and Spanish
- **Practice time with hands-on sessions**
  - Having a manager watch new task completion and provide feedback
- **Periodic performance feedback and retraining**

# What Employees Want cont'd



## ■ Job related knowledge

- To better understand their roles on the farm (how they contribute to the farm and what they are expected to do)
- Education on farm protocols and procedures
- To understand the “why” of their work activities

## ■ Specific training with the farm machinery

- Machinery operation and repair (if expected to know)

# English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Employees



- English-speaking employees:
  - Tend to be more experienced
  - More satisfied with their level of knowledge
  - Describe greater accessibility to management
  - Express their positive relationship with management
  - Comfortable expressing concerns and/or disagreements with management

# English- and Spanish-speaking Employees Cont'd



- Spanish-speaking employees:
  - Don't feel adequately trained
  - Want more direct communication with supervisors
  - Feel isolated on the farm and in the community
  - Have language barriers impeding relationships with co-workers
  - Desire more opportunities to enhance their job knowledge
  - Occupy a more dependent position on their employer (transportation, housing, food, etc.)

# SUMMARY

- There are many ways employees receive information about their job
- Training is typically informal, but varies by farm
- Time, language, and culture are major barriers to training
- Employees desire to be involved on the farm
- Employees want to receive positive recognition for their work

# SUMMARY CONT'D

- **Desired training includes:**
  - Small group discussion
  - Two way-communication
  - Visual and hands-on training
  - Retraining opportunities
- **Beliefs and desires of English- and Spanish-speaking employees differ**
- **Latinos are a large segment of the agricultural labor force**
  - About 41% of dairy farms in the US depend on foreign labor

