

**LABOR MANAGEMENT**

By Julie Berry

Accountability to one's self, co-owners and the business



BERNIE ERVEN

# Business Success Starts with Personal Accountability

PRO-DAIRY's Operations Managers Conference keynote offered a checklist for business success through personal accountability and life tips for success.

Bernie Erven, professor emeritus Ohio State University and Erven HR Services, focused on accountability to one's self, co-owners and the business, and offered guidance to become the type of manager who is a visionary, a problem solver and a people helper.

"It's not about age, but it is highly personal," Erven said. "It's about what you do, not what people do to you. It's not about opportunities you wish you had. It's about what you do have. It's about being responsible, being answerable for the actions of others, accepting blame, being humble."

Erven acknowledged that managing a farm is especially complicated because farms are typically family business.

"The biggest challenges in life are about family and children," he said.

Being a manager is about helping and enjoying the people part as much as the cow part. Helping your business succeed because your people are successes.

"Lead your people and your cows will follow," he said, quoting Tom Wall.

According to Erven, it's about looking into the mirror, and one by one asking:

1. Do you find someone to blame for the problems on your farm? Are you asking how do I get them to shape up instead of what do I need to change?
2. Are your co-workers mostly people you are unable to trust?
3. Do you worry more about how you are going to get through today than about future plans? Are you caught up in the current crises?
4. Do your responsibilities overwhelm you?
5. Do you fear being liable for the mistakes of others?

The more yeses, the more likely accountability is damaging your management success, he said. Yes answers signal possible corrective areas back home.

"It's not about survivability; it's about accountability. It's important to believe you are capable of

whatever changes may be necessary."

Four questions to guide discussion:

1. For what and to whom are you accountable?
2. What is my plan for delivering more than promised or expected?
3. How am I actually doing compared to how well I planned to do?
4. What are my planned changes?

For what am I accountable?

1. Leading
2. Building a farm culture that fits your goals. Culture is what we believe and the norms of behavior on the farm.
3. Creating opportunities
4. Producing good outcomes given the opportunities
5. Success or lack of it
6. Operating within community standards of responsibility

To Whom am I accountable?

1. One's self
2. Co-workers
3. The business

The bigger picture includes your family, the dairy industry and society.

"You are one catastrophe away from headlines," Erven said.

"Will you share your responsibilities or step up to the opportunities you have? No business succeeds while its people are failing," Erven said. "Satisfy the people you have right around you. They carefully watch, listen to and often follow what you are saying, doing and employing. You communicate your attitudes more by what you do than what you say. You best show your attitude by what you do."

In farm business, the cows, milk prices, weather, milking parlor and barns, make no management decisions. No business manages itself. It is the manager's responsibility. Expecting employees to subsidize your business is not accountable, he said.

## FYI

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## THE MANAGER

What is my plan for delivering more than promised or expected?

Success is when hard work meets opportunity. Planning is part of that hard work.

“In battle, plans are worthless, but I never go into battle without a plan,” Erven said quoting General Dwight Eisenhower.

If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. SWOT analysis to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats greases the planning gears. A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow. The process of planning matters more than the plan.

How am I doing compared to how well I planned?

This is a measurement of results and deals with facts, not fiction.

What are my planned changes?

This is where the rubber meets the road. You need to clearly understand needed changes and take corrective action.

Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze. Unfreeze paves the way for a new habit or way of doing things. Change creates a new practice. Freeze

reinforces the new habit.

What is your list of needed changes for better accountability, he asked? What is your plan for improvement in the next 12 months? Life-learned tips for success:

1. Approach accountability as a happy challenge and an opportunity.
2. Enjoy helping other people, while helping yourself and the business.
3. Remember, unfreeze, freeze, refreeze as guidance for managing change.
4. Learn how to be more successful this year than you were in previous years.
5. Learn to balance career goals versus personal goals, work life versus family and personal life and self-interest versus helping others.
6. Learn to leave the need to know everything about everything to someone else.
7. Avoid the curse of excuses and blaming others to explain why change is impossible. The opportunity for you is there.

Bring CAFO Under Management.....  
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Peck, a certified farm-environmental planner with 44 CAFO clients in New York. “It comes down to how high a priority it is. Some farms are very sophisticated with their records. Others, we just try to get it down on a sheet paper in the tractor.”

An example of a SMART record-keeping goal is: Manure and fertilizer application records are gathered and faxed to the consultant every Saturday morning before noon.

A SMART goal for inspections and maintenance tasks is: By September 1st, an at-a-glance system for tracking inspection/maintenance will be developed and hung in the employee break room.

SMART goals for other permit requirements should also be set. Involve others in management and key employees to develop CAFO compliance goals.

Determine what must be done

The next step is to develop a tactical plan to achieve CAFO goals. A tactical plan outlines the specific detailed actions to be taken. It answers four questions:

1. WHAT needs to be done?
2. WHO will do it?
3. WHEN will it get done?
4. HOW will it be done?

For the example of spreading records sent to the consultant, the WHATs may be:

- Ask crew to record manure loads.
- Develop spreading log with number of loads for each field.
- Put spreading log and field maps in each tractor.
- Assign person to gather logs and fax information.

The WHO, WHEN and HOW questions become evident once you logically work through all the WHAT questions. Repeat this process for each permit requirement goal. Have everyone involved in doing the work involved in developing the tactical plan.

Achieve results

To ensure your operation is moving toward its SMART goals, control plans must accompany the tactical plans. Control plans also ask four questions:

1. WHAT will be measured?
2. WHO and HOW will it be measured?
3. How OFTEN will it be measured?
4. WHEN will action be needed?

To follow through with our example, a control plan to check if records are sent to the consultant may be:

- Have consultant email when records are received.
- If reports fall more than two weeks behind, talk with appropriate employees.

“Every farm is different,” says Jim Peck. “And how they get things done are different. We can't put together one system that works for every farm.” It greatly helps to include trusted consultants as you develop your CAFO compliance program. They are familiar with plans on other farms and can help customize approaches specific for your operation.

Through your efforts and those of others

The most challenging part of managing is not setting goals, or developing plans, or ensuring that plans achieve the desired results. Rather, it's the people, all of them, from the part-time workers to the involved family owners. It is the ongoing interactions among people, and set of practices and procedures, that creates a workplace where everyone knows where the farm is headed and how their work contributes to get there.

It sounds so simple. But books upon books are written on the subject. All of them have one principle that stands true—involve people to set goals and develop plans so the importance of day-to-day tasks are recognized as a contribution to move the farm forward.

Apply this to CAFO and you have one less worry that can ruin a beautiful spring morning. ☐