



KEEP YOUR EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE AND MORALE HIGH BY ADOPTING THESE IDEAS

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Many of the jobs that your workers do such as milking, cleaning, and bedding, can become monotonous and boring. After some time, many of your employees may slack, slow down their pace, and may even start cutting corners. To make things worse, if you are employing Hispanic workers some of them may get depressed and home sick after a while, especially during winter.

Usually, increasing their paycheck will not be the solution to these problems since people need more than money to stay loyal and enthusiastic at work. Creating a positive atmosphere at the workplace will improve your front line worker's morale. Therefore, reducing turn over rate of Hispanic workers that want to go back home sooner than expected.

How can you create a positive atmosphere that can boost morale of your workers? - You don't need to spend a lot of money to keep your employee's morale high. There are five key areas that you need to focus on to create a positive environment. These are:

1. Recognize a job well done
2. Get them involved
3. Show concern and interest
4. Create a great work environment
5. Respect

Recognize a job well done - Employee recognition doesn't always have to be a formal process that involves monetary compensation and is structurally established at the beginning of the year or the month. In many instances, some of the best opportunities to build morale are recognizing employees on the spot. Verbal praise should be given immediately after an employee has completed a great job. In this case, using tangible rewards such as gifts can be an effective way to express appreciation. Catch an employee doing something right, for example by checking teat end cleanliness during milking, and hand him or her a calling card in recognition. This can be a great gift if the person is Hispanic (Hispanic workers usually use these cards to phone back home so make sure that you always have a few cards with you). There are many other ideas or gifts that can be used with your employees. Independently of how you recognize employee's excellence and hard work, don't do the same thing every time. If done routinely it will soon become part of the expected compensation package. Instead, one week use one type of morale booster, and the next week use a different one.

Here is a list of creative ways of boosting the morale and productivity of your work force by recognizing hard work and excellent performance:

- Bring lunch to your employee at work. This will show your employees that you recognize people when they excel at work. But in this case, it is important to also clearly express in detail the reason why that employee is getting the special treatment.
- Write a short thank you note (in the appropriate language) and stick it to his/her paycheck.

- Recognize important dates of immigrant workers culture. Join them for lunch that day and ask them about that special date.
- Chances are a lot of your Hispanic employees are big soccer fans. Get to know your employees favorite team and frequently ask them how their team is doing.
- If you have a nearby dairy farm neighbor that also employees Hispanic workers, set up an informal soccer game against them and start a fun rivalry.
- Have a pizza party for achieving a special team goal.
- Celebrate employee's birthdays by taking donuts or a cake during the morning or lunch break.
- Taking employees to training conferences or having a formal training program with an outside trainer at the farm can be a great way to not only recognize their good work, but also to keep employees motivated.
- Keep your workers entertained during winter. At a farm that I frequently visit, the owners have a foosball and ping pong tables in their tool shed where employees can spend time during their days off. The owners and employees also have special days where they will all hang out together at the tool shed and have foosball and ping pong tournaments. This can be a great bonding time and a great chance to get to know your workforce better.

The best you know your workforce the easiest will be to find the right things that your employees will like and value the most.

Unexpected but honest positive reinforcement will do wonders in the person's morale and productivity. My suggestion is not to wait for the big success to praise someone. Many times, a simple pat in the back, giving encouragement and support for a job well done, or praising for the little things they do well will go a long way.

Get them involved - As a manager you have to make people feel good about their jobs. In general, your employees want to feel involved in their jobs and want to feel important to the success of the dairy operation. You can help motivate your workforce by letting your employees participate when setting their own job goals and expectations. Also, let your employees give input and choice of how to do their work. For example: Get their opinion of whether one type of teat dipper or another should be used. Or give them the chance to participate in meetings where milk quality will be discussed and get their input on how to reduce somatic cell counts. Promoting job ownership will help boost your employee's morale and productivity.

Show concern and interest - Showing that you care about your workers doesn't cost any money and can greatly build up your employee's morale. Usually dairy workers, especially Hispanic employees, appreciate help on personal issues and want their manager to care about them as individuals. As a people manager, expect to spend quite some time coaching, counseling, and listening to your workers. The better you get to know your employees, the sooner you will identify when something is going wrong, when they are upset, or when someone is depressed or home sick.

Don't be afraid of getting involved in the employee's private life if you feel the person is trying to reach out to you for advice. Some of my clients often worry that Hispanic workers don't want them interfering in their private lives, but I often find that when the person is hurting they appreciate any assistance and advice from someone they can communicate with and trust. When the language barrier is an issue, finding an outside source that can speak the language and can periodically meet with the workers can be a great asset. Preferably you should find someone with labor management experience that has good people skills, and understands very well the cultural background of your workers.

Create a great work environment - This refers to both the physical workplace and the team environment at the dairy. The physical place in which people work says a lot about the dairy operation, its values and its policies. Just as you probably care about cow comfort in the barns, you should also care about having a comfortable and pleasant environment for your employees both at the workplace and their home (if you provide housing to your workers). These will affect both employee performance and efficiency while doing their job.

Employees working together as a team are usually more successful and productive. Promote teamwork by setting common goals and having them work together to achieve those goals. A good example that always has a positive result is having somatic cell counts and parlor performance goals. Done right, this will bring all the employees together and will motivate them to try harder.

Respect - Even though it is important to promote teamwork, always respect employees for who they are as individuals. Don't treat everyone the same. Everyone is different and treating people differently is part of helping them feel unique. This doesn't mean that you should have different rules for all the employees. However, have your staff participate when setting workplace rules and listen to the comments and suggestions they might have. Also, when making a new rule, it is very important to explain its purpose and enforce it fairly among all workers.

In summary, always remember that people are the most important asset of your dairy operation. Your employees will have a tremendous impact on your herd's health and performance and your dairy's profitability. So if you want to make a difference with your employees follow this advice:

- Show that you genuinely care about them
- Actively listen to what your employees have to say
- Make your employees feel good about the work they are doing
- Excite your employees about doing things that they never considered doing
- Treat people consistently and fairly
- Promote team work

When done right this will result in more inspired, hard working employees that always go the extra mile to promote the dairy operation's success.



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