

Traits of Successful Managers

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How does one become a successful dairy manager? Successful managers are those who take time to plan, set priorities which change as the situation changes and then evaluate how well their plan has working to achieve their goals. Farmers comment that they don't have time to sit down behind a desk. They have work that needs to get done. We need to remember that some parts of management do not need to be done behind a desk. Some farmers may do their best thinking while on a tractor or while doing other chores.

Planning- Planning ahead to anticipate needs is very important to contain costs of production as well as maintain profitability. For example if a farmer raises 10 extra heifers and wants to milk them, he needs additional forage. This needs to be addressed now so that plans can be made to purchase forages or other commodities to stretch the forage supply so that the forage supply does not limit milk production later. This process needs to be done each year even if animals are not added. Forage supply and quality change yearly and planning how to best utilize the forages on hand can help prevent shortages later, improve long-term cash flow, and help maintain production at a profitable level.

Implementation- The second trait of successful managers is their ability to get work done in a timely manner while paying special attention to those tasks which are the most important. We often hear the statement that I already know more than I can get done. But the key to a successful manager is to set priorities and to accomplish those tasks first. When considering changes, the top two or three priorities need to be established, make these changes or accomplish these tasks, and then proceed down the list. The key here is to set priorities and accomplish those tasks or changes in that order. By using this approach, at the end of the month or season you can feel like you have accomplished your goal and then you can decide what should be accomplished next.

Evaluation- Successful managers always step back and evaluate how well different programs have worked. You need to ask yourself - are the current ways of managing your operation resulting in the best profit margins or are there ways to improve your operation. What works for one manager or company may not work for another. But, you must constantly evaluate how well things are working and look for ways to improve. You need to ask yourself- Are there ways to feed your cows easier, cheaper but at the same time improve profit? Did my changes improve performance, health or my bottom line?

Now is the time to step back and plan for your future needs of your dairy operation, reevaluate your priorities for getting things done, and evaluate how well your program is working.