

# Communication Matters in Farm Transition



# Communication..

- Why
- What
- How



## Why is Communication Important?

It is said that “85% of all conflict is due to Miscommunication”

If we want a successful transition, we cannot expect it to happen without good communication



## But WHAT do we need to communicate?

- Why
- Vision and Goals
- Expectations
- Logistics
- Transition Plan



## Starting with Why

- Why do you farm?
  - Drives how you look at things and your decisions
  - Do others on your farm know?
- Why does your farm exist?



## Vision and Goals

- Both generations need to clearly articulate where they see the farm in the future.. And
- What goals they have
- It would common for some goals to not be consistent with the other generations goals



## Expectations

- What do you see as your role(s) in this process?
- What do you see as others role(s) in this process?



## Logistics

- How you operate as the leader of your farm operation
- Your successor should become your shadow



## Transition Plan

- Are you clearly communicating how and when you see the transition plan being accomplished?
- Do both generations agree on the plan?
- When and how are you communicating the plan with non-farming heirs?



## How do we communicate?

- Webster, *“The exchange of thoughts, messages or information.”*
- Issues
  - Lack listening skills
  - Lack ability or opportunity to express ideas

*“Seek first to understand and then to be understood!”*, Steven Covey



FACTS

FEELINGS

PRECEPTIONS



# Nonverbal Communication

- **Body Language**
  - Posture
  - Facial Expressions
  - Gestures



- Listening Quiz



# Improve Listening Skills

- Become People Conscious
  - Remember and call people by their **names**
  - Use **positive speech**
  - **Meanings are in people, not words**
    - Words may have more than one meaning
    - Word meanings change
    - Some words may not give enough information



# Improve Listening Skills

- Limit **Listening Barriers**
  - Faking attention
  - Responding to the wrong thing
  - Using your filters



# Improve Listening Skills

- Speak at a moderate rate
- Give Feedback
  - Clarify, paraphrase, respond



# Verbal Communications

## Improving verbal communications

- Think before you speak
- Know your audience
- Be specific and simplify
- Present thoughts logically
- Be patient
- Summarize
- Give and get feedback
- Practice effective listening



## “You” Messages

You messages tend to blame, order or evaluate

“I noticed that some of “You” were late for the meeting tonight”

- ‘You’ messages label the receiver instead of describing your feelings
- ‘You’ messages put the receiver on the defensive against a negative message
- ‘You’ messages tend to create inhibitions and closed behavior because of distrust



## Using “I” messages

Can be effective in dealing with problems with another person

- When I arrived for the meeting tonight...  
“The event”
- And there were only a few people here...  
”The effect”
- I felt disappointed...”The feeling”



## Using “I” messages

Can be effective in dealing with problems with another person

- Places responsibility with the sender
- Reduces other person’s defensiveness
- Does not evaluate the other person
- Promotes communications
- Builds trust and creates empathy



# Written Communication

## Ways to improve Written Communications

- Write to read, you cannot be heard
- Keep it **short**
- Use **familiar words**, avoid jargon where possible
- Be **clear** and **definite**



# Written Communication

## Ways to improve Written Communications

- Use **graphics**
- **Edit** ruthlessly
- **Proof-read**, find the typos before someone else does
- Write so you cannot be misunderstood



# Bizarro by Dan Piraro



# Communication

## Male and Female Differences

1. Problem Solving
2. Information
3. Conversation
4. Directions
5. Support



## Generational Differences

- Often 3 different generations working on the farm
- Each generation grew up in a different era
- Each looks at things (job/work) differently
- Each needs to be part of the solution to communicate across these differences



## Older Generation Vs. Younger Generation

- Older Generation perceived Satisfaction of communication higher, problems lower, and resources higher than the younger generation
- This is affected by
  - Stage of life related to the business
  - Generational differences in expectations
  - Life-stage events (marriage, newborns, retirement)
  - Each individuals contribution to communication



# Communication Blockers

## **Directing/Ordering**

“Stop complaining...” “Try harder...”

## **Threatening/Warning**

“You had better...”  
“If you don’t.....”

## **Moralizing/Preaching**

“You ought to...”  
“Nice girls don’t...”

## **Lecturing/Arguing**

“The fact is...”  
“Yes, but *this* is the way...”

## **Advice Giving**

“Why don’t you ...”  
“If you would do this...”

## **Criticizing/Blaming**

“You’re not thinking straight..”  
“You’re acting like an idiot...”  
“You should have...”

## **Diagnosing/Counseling**

“You don’t really mean that...”  
“What you need is....”

## **Cross-examining, Prying**

“When are you going to .....?”  
“Why did you do that?”

## **Denying/reassuring/withdrawing**

“Don’t worry about it...”  
“It’s not that big of a deal...”  
“Lets not talk about it now...”



## Communication Openers

1. Be attentive. Look, listen, track
2. Invite responses.
3. Summarize.
4. Ask and Clarify.



## Communication

- Hold business meeting for managers/owners
  - Set a regular schedule for updates
  - Set dates for quarterly meeting for financial and operations reviews.
  - Hold annual meeting with full financial review, business production/financial analysis and update short & long term goals



Any  
Questions ?

