MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

Actions of people result primarily from impulse and reason.

Goals of motivation are to get the desired behavior and profitability from endeavor, and to maintain a happy, healthy workforce. These often appear as negatively correlated functions. In such situations, managers must plan to give up some of one or more of the three variables to achieve an acceptable level of the total of all three. The ultimate goal becomes the optimum mixture of profit, happiness and health.

Nearly everything imaginable has been tried by someone somewhere in an effort to motivate people. Some have tried threats and punishment. Some have tried manipulation and bribery, rewards, praises, and promises. These often fail because would-be motivators were trying to do things to people when motivation is something that comes from within.

People are almost always motivated. The important questions are by whom and for what purposes. If your workers are to be highly motivated to do things you want, they must be working in a situation or with a set of conditions that cause them to develop motivation from within. Of course, there is no guarantee that a particular individual will be motivated -- even under the best of conditions. You may do everything possible to create the situation you think necessary to provide incentives of motives for the individual, and he still may fail to respond as you desire.

Oldsters tend to operate too much by imitation; newcomers, by instinct. In the future, managers and employees will be better educated. Masters of science and doctors of philosophy frequently will be prerequisites to managerial positions. These men and women will be much more professional in their management. They will manage much less by imitation much more from their own knowledge.

Farming has two substantial disadvantages to overcome as a work place. One is nepotism. The other is the distance from urban areas.

Skilled laborers will come to you from the industrial labor market rather than from farms for two primary reasons: There is precious little surplus labor left on farms as a reservoir of off-farm labor for any employer; and most people who migrate from farms do so on an escape-type basis. They are trying to accomplish the transition from farming to urbanity in one fell swoop, rather than by the one-generation transition with which most of us are familiar. Unskilled laborers, especially when organized, will be a first-class challenge to managerial skills -- unless our national boundaries are opened to immigrants to a degree unprecedented in this century.

There is a great deal of misguided faith that all is well with a farm or cooperative because it has a neat financial audit prepared by an accountant.

1/ Prepared by Dr. Ralph A. Eastwood, Economist, Marketing, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida for delivery at 8:30 A.M., May 13, 1970 in the J. Wayne Reitz Union Auditorium at the Seventh Annual Dairy Production Conference.

2/ Copies of the publication from which this speech is an extract may be secured from the author.
Balance sheets and operating statements do not indicate how a farmer goes about building his cash flow. They do not reflect the hidden long-range costs of personnel disintegration when it occurs. That is to say they do not show when the farmer in effect builds cash position by depreciating or selling personnel assets which do not appear on a conventional balance sheet. Sooner or later such a farmer has a major personnel rebuilding job for a number of years if he is to stay in business. The costs of rebuilding assuredly will show on the operating statement. Motivation through pay adjustments and fringe benefits can be only a short run solution, because these tend to motivate people only to demand further increases. Motivation through job enrichment by job design is much more likely to be the lasting part of the rebuilding program in such circumstances.

Analysis of the management of your cooperative may pay you many fold. There are two basic types of audits. Financial audits analyze the financial changes that have occurred between two periods of time. Managerial audits analyze the capability of management to produce desired results in the future. Financial audits essentially are oriented on the specific backward looking financial history of a business. The managerial audits are oriented to the future. The managerial economist constantly assesses all tentative resource allocations relevant to the economic circumstances surrounding a firm or society. Both financial and managerial audits are desirable, if not essential.

You would be well advised to have a financial audit done annually by a certified public accountant. In addition, you would be equally well advised to have a managerial audit at less frequent intervals; perhaps every 3 to 5 years.

Your employees act in terms of their belief systems. Effective leadership must operate through these people. The basic needs of your employees will tend to be met through the operations of your local social systems within your framework of formal and informal organizations. Your local social systems provide your employees a sense of belonging or rejection and a reserve or drain of emotional support. These come about from your, and their, systems; through your beliefs and social interactions -- and through theirs.

People have individual needs that they must get from their jobs. Some of these come from being in groups. Their basic biological needs are one source. These include survival, safety, social and status needs. A second set involves mental growth, characterized by self-realization, fulfillment, self-development, autonomy, and growth in an intellectual sense.

Dissatisfying goals include pay, fringe benefits, working conditions, promotion opportunities, information gaps and barriers, and work associations. These can be either positive or negative dissatisfiers. Rarely do they actually satisfy an employee. The dissatisfiers are largely extrinsic to the work itself.

Satisfying goals appear to be largely intrinsic to the work itself -- its interest, its challenge, its sense of achievement, and its worth. The satisfiers
include interest, work, and feelings of completion, responsibility, and personal growth.

Supervision must be continually in the eye of the motivator. Too many bosses spoil the group. Supervisors are the top measurable impact group. They should increase the effectiveness of the production level. If not, they should be replaced or the position discontinued. Supervision is evolving away from certain yesterday concepts. One is that the supervisor is the one around whom the whole group evolves, through whom all papers flow, and by whom all decisions are made. Another is that of direction, facilitation, renewal and control. The evolving pattern is one that concentrates on building a group that can do the job, and will function well even if the supervisor is away for considerable periods.

The pattern of positive leadership in supervisory positions that will assure the greatest long-run effectiveness is based on cooperation, participation, consultation, consistent adherence to high standards of achievement, and satisfaction for the egos of the rank and file. This will require the strong leader to restrain his natural drive towards self assertion and will require all leaders to deal in a firm, authoritarian manner with a maladjusted minority if it attempts to disrupt the group.

The leader on your farm must know when and how to use both positive and negative motivation. Positive motivation is superior to negative when the necessary time, rapport, skill and group environment are present to make it possible.

Negative is indicated: (1) when time is short; (2) if you cannot establish rapport; (3) when an employee has a high security, low-self-esteem combination which leads him not to desire to take part in decision making and to desire a dependent relationship with his superior; and (4) with the trouble makers. Otherwise, negative motivation is better than no motivation at all or the laissez faire approach. Also you must apply negative motivation, in the interest of the group, to a minority when it has proved itself non-receptive to positive motivation. However your negative motivation will be most effective when it encourages types of behavior that are rewarded by relief from stresses and by satisfaction of personal needs.

Supervisors can serve better by defining mission needs and priorities. This could be a sound decision as to quality and timeliness that avoid superspeed or perfection. You could reverse any of the negative impacts to make a positive impact of importance. You could make a cost-benefit study of available alternatives. You could provide equipment, facilities, or methods that reduce costs. You may select capable people and carefully develop them. You can use the enabling style of supervision to see that the needs of your group are met, that they are well supplied and that they are protected from undue demands so that they can operate freely and effectively. You can do liaison work to seek a more level work load and more stable resources. You can help your group find solutions to operating problems that interest them and complete the work set out in goals. You can be developing those with potential to move into better opportunities.