

## Putting the 'Culture' Back in Agriculture

Employee engagement improves profits.

What are your top 2023 priorities? If you're like most farmers, it's probably profitability and efficiency. As you examine various parts of your business for improvement, look at your culture. While that might sound like 'soft skills' to some of you, I assure you it is not. Remember, every family or ranching business has a culture — one that is either created or allowed. Creating culture is not always easy and takes constant maintenance, but the benefits of getting your work environment to a place where people get along, communicate

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clearly and stay for years is entirely worth the effort.

Crafting a positive, productive culture is not just about improving

employee behavior, though some employees may need to make behavioral changes to remain in your organization and be successful. It's about a conscious strategy that leaders create and adopt, which permeates everything. The most productive cultures are those where people are engaged because these teams

know the high cost of a disengaged employee. Researchers vary on the impact of disengaged employees and the percentage of disengaged employees, but most put that figure somewhere between 16.5% and 35% of workers.

Think about that for a second. If one-third of your employees are working at a level far below their capacity, what is that costing you? Possibly even more concerning is the possibility of how much the unengaged employee affects those who are doing well. Are they feeling demotivated when they see a fellow employee 'getting away with it?'

Take some time this winter to evaluate your employee engagement and the impact it has on your bank account. Then, consider ways to improve engagement for the bottom line. **HW**

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### Five ways engagement improves profit

#### No. 1: Trust

Trust is earned when employees are more engaged in the team. This is especially important when jobs are spread out across miles and acres, which they certainly are in the livestock sector. A lack of trust is expensive; it leads to managers constantly checking or redoing an employee's task.

#### No. 2: Communication

Engaged teams have mastered their own brand of effective communication. Good communicators save you money in the form of fewer errors or omissions and less damaged equipment or wasted inputs. Research says positive communication also results in fewer missed days; a disengaged employee doesn't really care if they show up.

#### No. 3: Retention

Searching, hiring and onboarding new employees takes lots of time and adds up in personnel costs. Save yourself some of this headache and money by ensuring employees are engaged — if they are engaged and support your goals, they will stay.

#### No. 4: Knowledge and Capacity

Engaged team members like to get better and desire to learn something every day. These 'improvers' elevate your systems, processes and output, and they teach others around them, too.

#### No. 5: Productivity

Possibly the most important on the list, engaged employees simply do better work. They work harder, faster and with more dedication. This leads to things you care about like higher yields or higher live births in livestock. **HW**