

Business improvement

Can talking really increase your profits?

Spend time off farm, talk to other producers and learn from them. These were just a few of the messages given to a group of East Anglia producers by Tom Phillips, Pasture for Profit.

Tom has made a business of getting farmers talking. He explained how, as a facilitator to numerous farmer groups, he has helped many farms improve key performance indicators.

He highlighted that a group of 10 farmers could quite easily have over 200 years of experience and that this should be utilised far more than it is currently.

From his experience it was stated that groups are most successful when there is:

- group ownership
- a diverse group of people
- about 10 - 15 companies represented
- willingness to talk about own performance

However, problems arise when the group becomes 'closed'. Not only does this discourage new members from joining, but it also means that there are fewer new ideas/views brought into the group.

Tom also believes that holding back the constructive criticism will limit the progress made by individual members: A clear and objective view of your farm from other producers is one of the main benefits of the groups.



Participants also took a short test to discover their individual learning style, useful for when joining a new group. The afternoon saw break out groups identify current strengths and weaknesses within the industry and how this could be improved with effective facilitation.

Key take home messages

- The knowledge needed is already in the industry but needs to be communicated more effectively.
- Group facilitation is a vital role.
- The facilitator should be independent to realise the potential of the group.
- The facilitator is not the organiser!

Tess Howe, 07779 321078

In brief:

Calling all training providers:

BPEX is currently putting together a comprehensive list of trainers and colleges that provide training opportunities for the industry (both formal and informal). If you want your details to be added to this list get in touch with Tess Howe.

BPEX is currently developing a number of ideas to promote skills development within the industry and encourage new people to join. If you need any more information about the topics in this newsletter, would like more information about staff development, or if you have an article for a future Producers for Profit newsletter please contact Tess Howe, 07779 321078 or tess_howe@bpex.org.uk.

Cornish Training

BPEX in association with Duchy college are looking at running a series of workshops based around the Pig industry Certificates of Competence. If you are interested in attending these workshops please get in touch with Tess Howe or Helen Thoday.

Work Experience

Work experience can provide a real insight in a working farm and could be the start of a career in the industry. Colleges and schools are regularly looking for placements. If you are willing to take on work experience staff, please contact BPEX.

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It's good to talk!



Trainee of the year launched nationwide

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PIPR Launch

23 May, Kings Fund Building, London

In launching the Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR), Lord Rooker gave it his, and Defra's, full support.

Jack Ward (NPTC) and Richard Longthorp (producer and pig industry training champion) introduced the new scheme to an invited group of producers, government, allied industry and funding bodies.

PIPR has been established to encourage lifelong learning and to recognise professionalism of the pig industry. Individuals will gain independent recognition with minimal costs and paperwork. Richard Longthorp explained: "It is vital to get good people into the industry, train them and keep them. The modern pig industry is high-tech, innovative and forward looking. If somebody started at 18 and was well trained, by 25 they could be managing a 500-sow farrow to finish unit with a turnover close to a million and a salary to match. What other industries can provide that level of opportunity?"



Jack Ward (NPTC) with Lord Rooker, Minister for Sustainable Farming and Food

"PIPR is a trail blazer ... I'll be urging other food industries to sit up, take notice and do the same" Lord Rooker

In short, PIPR aims to:

- promote a professional image
- recognise all skills & experience
- establish an independent record of skills
- promote staff development
- raise productivity and profitability

Contact: tess_howe@bpex.org.uk.

If I train my staff, they will leave...

...is the common reason for managers not wanting to invest in staff, but what is the reality?

In the early 1990's, the JSR Farming Group introduced a new development strategy, having recognised that an informed, well-trained and motivated workforce was essential to its future success. Since then, they have been reaping the business benefits of staff improvement.

Staff appraisals initiated the strategy and identified many issues that were holding both staff and the company back: in particular staff lacked confidence in their abilities. Following appraisals, training could be provided with confidence that it was what individual staff both **needed** and **wanted**. The costs associated with this development, in terms of time and finances, haven't been small but the impressive returns seen, have made it worthwhile. These include:

- production increases
- increase in marketing margins
- and in answer to the opening question: **reduction in staff turnover !!**

JSR is not alone with these results; companies that regard training as an essential part of their business plan see similar results. So go on, let your staff attend that workshop and discover faster business improvement for yourself.

For further information and other training initiatives log on to www.bpex.org.uk

The farm in front is working like Toyota

The Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) helps farmers utilise the tools and techniques of Toyota to become more efficient

It is easy to understand the initial doubt amongst farmers participating in a workshop talking about cars and playing with plugs, all in an attempt to improve their efficiency. However, for those farmers that took the time out to listen to producers that have participated in masterclasses, the potential business benefits are significant. The masterclasses use valuable, but simple, management methods originally developed by ultra efficient Toyota.

You may be wondering what a pig farm and a car manufacturer have in common, on the face of it perhaps very little. But there is one thing: being so busy that we forget to look at the bigger picture! We carry out tasks in the way we always have done for ease, not because it is necessarily the most efficient way. The main aim of the workshop is to highlight how easy it can be to implement changes that **will** improve efficiency. This can provide cost benefits and free up time for other jobs.

Reviewing processes, planning and implementing change and reviewing again can seem daunting to many, but with the help of the RMIF, producers are seeing impressive results, YOU CAN TOO. Malcolm_macdonald@rmif.org.uk



Effective Training

- The learning Cycle

Training staff isn't just about sending staff on a course. By investing time beforehand to review individual needs and afterwards to understand what was learnt the training experience will be more effective, relevant and more importantly enjoyable. Then don't forget to allow the new ideas to be followed through and implemented, this will do wonders to improve staff motivation, confidence and morale.



Did you know ... Investment in staff has resulted in a 12 % increase in farrowing rates on some units.

Stockman's lesson in survival

BPEX KT Team run spring workshops on piglet survival

During Spring the BPEX Knowledge Transfer (KT) Team have been busy running over 20 workshops focusing on 'Improving piglet survival'. Over 430 stock people and managers attended the workshops to listen to the speakers, and also discuss their own farrowing house issues with other people in similar situations. Following brief presentations from members of the KT team and guest speakers, small groups discussed the issues in detail,

allowing everybody the opportunity to contribute. These results were then fed back to the group as a whole, leaving the vast majority with many new ideas to take back to their units. Positive feedback has been received from the events which are the first in a series to be organised by the KT team. The most common point coming back to the team was the value of meeting other stockmen and pooling ideas and experience. One pointed out they can feel isolated on their own units and they welcomed the opportunity to talk to other stockmen. If you missed the opportunity to attend these workshops, the information is now available on the BPEX website; alternatively the KT team would be happy to discuss organising another workshop in your area. Plans are now being made for the Autumn series of workshops which will start in October. Please contact your KT manager for further details or email:

kt@bpex.org.uk



Prestigious Training Award goes National

For the past five years, Agskills has recognised the achievements of its most successful members by awarding the Pfizer Trainee of the Year award.

The award, sponsored by Pfizer and the NPA, has seen a number of high quality entrants from Agskills members over the years, but in recognition of the now industry wide commitment to staff development, the decision has now been taken to make the award national. 'There are hundreds of talented people in this industry and this is an opportunity for them to add the industry's most prestigious training award to their curriculum vita,' said Pfizer Animal Health product manager Emmeline Randall.

Skills and knowledge already within the industry are increasingly being acknowledged. This award, which includes £2,000 worth of training, is hopefully a move towards more people recognising the effort and commitment that goes into being a skilled stockperson and encouraging others. Previous awards have seen fierce competition amongst producers to reach the finals. 'I would like to think this competitive streak among pig-keepers will now become evident at a national level,' said Pig World editor Sam Walton.

Further information and entry forms can be downloaded from www.bpex.org.uk.

Roger Ranson, roger@bhrcommunications.co.uk.



from left: Steve Thomas, Andrew Fowler, Prof Jeff Wood, Anthony Williams and Nick White

Group Success

Finding good staff, training them and keeping them motivated can be hard but some producers are tackling the problem head on.

A group of forward thinking pig producers in East Anglia have formed the East of England Pig Training Group (EEPTG). By joining the group, and securing funding from their Rural Development Agency (RDA), the companies involved now have access to practical, flexible and

cost effective training.

Talking about the group and its effects on their staff and business, Chairman of EEPTG Jonathan Green said 'The courses were delivered and assessed in a way that really suited us without the need for large amounts of paperwork'. Paul Arundel of BQP said 'several BQP staff attended these initial training days, all returned to work with very positive feedback and a

professional qualification'. Since the first workshop, over 170 businesses have been involved and over 50 stock people have gained nationally recognised qualifications, with many more improving their knowledge and practical skills. Further workshops are planned throughout the summer months, details of which are on the BPEX website.

J Bradley, 07881 780340