While there are still a few legal challenges remaining before the presidential election is finalized, we are preparing for the changes that will occur under a Biden administration. Many things will be different, including different priorities and different personalities at most federal agencies. At the same time, the government is likely to be divided because the Republicans currently have more seats in the Senate and will probably keep that lead in 2021.

President Trump did several things that decreased the cost and burden of regulations on dairy farms. He also pursued some improvements in trade deals that will help us export more dairy products to other countries.

As the administration transitions, we hope that the positive momentum to improve trade with new and growing markets for dairy can continue. There are a lot of opportunities for us to trade more with the United Kingdom, India and several counties in Southeast Asia.

We also saw the House of Representatives pass a bill in late 2019 that would have created a new year-round visa for agricultural workers. This was the first time an immigration reform bill of any kind has passed in the House since the 1980s. We were working on getting a similar bill through the Senate, but that effort ended when priorities shifted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are hopeful this process can resume in 2021 and that President-elect Biden would be inclined to sign the bill if we can get it passed in Congress. This would be a big improvement if it can happen.
Start a training plan

By Elsie Gonzalez M.S., Motiva Consulting

Great animal care starts with well-trained employees that understand the importance of their jobs in taking the best care of animals at every stage of their lives. After developing written step-by-step procedures for animal care tasks, the next step is to share these with employees in a way that they engage, understand it and follow it.

A good approach to educating employees in an organized manner is to have one person in charge of training employees and following a training plan. A training plan will have specific tasks that an employee needs to understand and be able to do to meet expectations for his/her position. There will be specific things that we want to train employees on the first day of their employment, while others can be trained within the first week, or the first month, etc.

An example of a training plan checklist for milkers and cow movers to cover from the first day and within the first month may be:

- Provide a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) applicable to his/her job responsibilities
- Review and sign an animal care policy and agreement
- Explain procedures to the employee in the milking parlor
- Explain the function of each pen to employee
- Show the holding area and briefly discuss crowd gate use
- Show a milking procedure video (if available)
- Discuss the dangers of working with cattle, what can go wrong and how to be safe while working with cattle
- Show videos on moving cows effectively and calmly
- Work with employee on best practices to move cows and how positioning affects cow movement
- Explain milking pen order
- Explain leg band colors and what to do with these
- Explain milk quality, mastitis and reporting protocol
- Discuss proper ways to cleaning stalls and alleys, and move cows into the holding area
- Explain what to do with slow moving cows and a downed cow
- Discuss cow health concerns and identification
- Explain before and after milking set up, including washing and cleaning
- Explain switching tanks
- Discuss chemical handling safety and personal protective equipment
- Discuss skid steer safety and perform driving test to ensure employees is proficient at driving safely

As a milker or cow mover gets more experienced, there will be many others things to add to our checklist. Training plans are customized for each dairy and specific for the different jobs or responsibilities, whether it is milkers, cow movers, feeders, calf barn staff, maternity and new born care, feeding, etc. Even when we do not have new employees, it will be beneficial to go over at least three of items at a monthly team meeting or even gathering the team more often.

Having a checklist of items helps us stay organized and set time aside to educate individuals or a team on how and why we do what we do. What topics are you going to discuss with your team during the next meeting?
Building the right training environment

By Jorge Delgado, Alltech

Our workers should be distinguished as very important elements of our business, and the role that they play in our operations should be well defined. For example, “milking technicians” instead of just “milkers”. People want and need to know that they matter and that the work they do is seen as important and relevant.

The next step in preparing to start training your employees is to create a framework to communicate with them by using three main points of engagement:

“Anonymity”

By opening lines of communication through affirmations and other words of acknowledgment, you eliminate the feeling of anonymity among your workers.

Measurement

We need to start thinking outside of the box and help our employees measure themselves by tracking their own progress. By doing this, they will see their own individual contributions and will be encouraged to work together to become better overall.

Irrelevance

Our employees need to be reminded on a regular basis that their work has a purpose and that they are helping somebody or something beyond themselves.

Now that we understand how we should engage people before, during and after our trainings, we need to use the “four drivers of motivation” as a fundamental part of finding a person’s “why.”

1. The drive to acquire
Keep in mind that every employee has the drive to secure an income. An example of this is not necessarily a monetary benefit, but perhaps the use of time or resources for their own benefit.

2. The drive to bond
People want to form connections, both with their coworkers and their boss. The meeting place is an excellent way to form work and personal connections.

3. The drive to comprehend
People want to know why they are doing a task and what they are doing. They possess a need to satisfy their curiosity.

4. The drive to defend
For most, this will be their family or culture. However, once we begin to understand each other’s “why,” this could also be a drive to defend the industry in which they work and realizing their purpose and need within that industry.

Start every meeting with a personal “why.” Use this as motivation for employees to do and be their best when performing tasks around the dairy after receiving formal training.

And of course, don’t ever forget the importance of having a designated area for training. Many technicians may not have prior dairy experience, so visual and educational aids will come in handy.

Adopting a new employee management and training approach is the only solution for a dairy industry that wants to attract and retain good employees.
There are a few things that can affect a person more than their health. Your health affects your personal life, work, finances, social life and I could go on and on. It is very important to make sure you are taking care of your health so you can succeed in all areas of your life.

There are a few simple things you should start off with. First, make sure you are eating a healthy diet, consuming a variety of fruits and vegetables, and drinking plenty of water. Also ensure you are getting enough sleep, ideally at least 8 hours a night. Talk to your doctor about any health concerns you may have so you can address them before they become a serious issue. There are many organizations across the state that offer free health clinics for you to get a check-up or address any concerns you may have.

In the current COVID world we live in, there are a few extra steps we need to be taking. Wear a mask whenever you’re around other people. Maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet from others. Wash your hands frequently for a minimum of 20 seconds, with warm water. Only leave your home for work and the essentials. Lastly, if you are not feeling well, stay home and get tested for COVID if you have symptoms.

Working in the dairy industry can be physically and mentally demanding. Taking care of yourself and your health outside of work will help you immensely at work.

Other things you can do to improve your health at work:

- Stretch before your shift. Take a few minutes before you shift starts to stretch out your muscles and prepare your body for the work you are about to do.
- Make sure you stay hydrated and dress appropriately for the weather.
- Be sure to follow your farm’s operating procedures and safety protocols. They have been created and designed to keep you safe and prevent injuries.

There are many resources available to help you stay healthy. Join an online group that focuses on healthy eating tips and recipes. Contact your local Hispanic services agency to get referrals to medical clinics, dental clinics and mental health support. Many of their services are available for little to no cost. Taking care of your health will improve all aspects of your life.

**Member profile:** Saydi McFarlandale Dairy

Saydi has worked for 3 years at McFarlandale Dairy in Water-town, Wisconsin; and 5 years with the dairy industry in Wisconsin.

**What was your first job at McFarlandale Dairy and current job?**

My first job was milking and moving cows. Now, in addition to parlor and barn work, I also work delivering calves, working with fresh cows and newborn calves, and helping train new employees.

**How do you continue learning about dairy farming?**

I learn from more experienced coworkers and work with the owners. I ask a lot of questions to understand and learn about cows from online videos. I ask others that also do similar jobs at other dairies to learn how they deal with the same situations.

**What advice do you have for someone new working on a dairy?**

This is a beautiful job that teaches a lot about life if you take it seriously. You need to show interest and be willing to learn a lot, work hard and do the job right.

**About the DBA**

The Dairy Business Association is an organization of Wisconsin dairy farmers, milk processors, vendors and business partners who make sure Wisconsin dairy farmers of all sizes have the support they need to thrive in the state’s economy, communities and food supply chain.