

'Leading on the Farm' Transcript

Dig In Finances Podcast

A Conversation with Amber Roberts and Nathan Hulinsky

[Music Starts]

Amber Roberts:

[00:00:05] What makes a great leader and how can we learn to be better leaders on our farm?

Welcome to this special edition of becoming a great farm supervisor podcast. In episode four, we're going to talk all about leadership. I'll be joined by my colleague, Nathan Hulinsky an extension educator.

We'll share a little bit about what leadership means, a self-assessment tool that you can use to understand your type of leadership, and leave you with a better understanding of how your leadership style impacts farm employees and the relations that you have with them.

Let's dive into this leadership discussion, Nathan.

Nathan Hulinsky:

[00:00:52] What makes a leader? Attitude, motivation manager, power appreciation, and responsibility. These different leaders have different verbs, adjectives associated with them. Intelligent, honest, creative, confident, driven, courageous. They're all good adjectives. What kind of leader do you want to be? We're not going to spend a lot of time right now discussing that, but I want you to think of it, right? What kind of leader do you want to be?

Who do you want to strive to be like?

So then the next thought is what do you need to do to become that kind of leader? What do you need to do to be more like that person? So just, just think on that.

So on the farm side of things, from being an operations manager to a leader, that's a difficult transition to me. So a lot of times farming, you grew up, you were, the, the hands-on person, you became good at it. You expanded your operation, you were a manager, milking the cows for an example. And now as you've been [00:02:05] successful, you expand

your farm. You hire more labor. You now are a leader, but this transition is going to be at least as difficult, you know, as a challenge from a worker to operations manager.

So the point of this is moving up the corporate ladder on the farm from, hands-on farmer to more of a leader and an employee manager is a difficult transition. And, and we do know that people struggle with it, and there's nothing wrong with that. We just want to highlight ways to better that.

Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder. Okay. Milking cows, in the most. Efficient timeframe, right? We want to get, 50 cows milk per hour. We want to get a hundred cows milk per hour, these efficiency things. That's the management side of things, growing crops.

We want to get the most bushels per acre, with a [00:03:05] lower amount of inputs. That's the management side of things. But the leadership side of things here is determining whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall. So are we milking these cows very quickly, but we also want to make sure that we're milking the cows properly and milking the right amount of cows.

Maybe it's really efficient. We can get, you know, two cows milked an hour and in two minutes, But that's not a very sufficient way to maintain the business. So leadership is a little bit more of an overall approach, making sure that we're doing the proper things on the farm to keep it sustainable.

Some key points , leadership is needed and valued throughout the organization. Informal leadership is more powerful than formal leadership. So I know we were teaching, teaching a similar class to this years before. And the one guy stood up and said, after [00:04:05] walking through some of these things, he realized that his, his one employee manager was more well-respected than him as an owner.

Another title doesn't mean you have proper leadership. Informal leadership is more powerful than formal leadership. Having the employees willing and able to ask you questions about what they should do, what's our next step is the informal leadership versus just going up to someone else who maybe they respect has a better understanding and better thought process of what is going on.

Great farms and businesses, required both management and leadership can be learned. Okay. So with that, I would have Amber talk.

Amber Roberts:

[00:04:56] Great. Thanks Nathan. We are going to discuss six different types of leadership styles.

If you're listening and you want to take the leadership style questionnaire before listening to the rest of this podcast. We've included a link to this questionnaire in the podcast description. The questionnaire itself, takes about 10 minutes and we'll help you to know what your preferred leadership style is.

As we're talking through them, though, I'm sure that some of these will resonate with you.

For some folks, they have one leadership style that really resonates with them. For others, it might be two or three, but a big thing I want to point out before we dive into these, no leadership style is necessarily bad. All of these have a place that they are effective and that they are very much needed. On top of that these are our preferred styles. So this is what we tend to like to do, but we may be able to use all of these throughout our lifetime. Note that we aren't necessarily pigeonholing ourselves into, I am an authoritative leader. That is who I am. But I tend to [00:06:05] most fall onto authoritative leadership and that is Amber's preference.

We will dive on in, if you haven't done, the questionnaire would recommend afterwards, go back and also feel free to share that with employees if you find them valuable.

[00:06:18] The first one we're going to dive into is coercive of leadership. It's this, do it, or else expectation of immediate compliance very little to no input influence with discipline. So this might sound scary, but it very much has a time and a place cohorsive leadership on your farm might be when it comes to safety. We know that cohorsive leaders have increased worker safety and they're more likely to have employees follow the rules because this really is about, I'm going to say it and you need to follow my instructions. There is definitely a time and a place for this famous cohorsive leaders. Would be Winston Churchill. Think about the stress that he faced going into decisions surrounding war.

He had to be a coercive leader, and you might find this on your farm when it comes to farm safety, like we said, grain bin safety. When it comes to how you handle and treat animals, there may be no room to deviate from those rules. We need to follow the grain safety rules, because if we don't, it could be a matter of life or death.

Coercive leadership sometimes also called commanding leadership is best for crisis situations for unresponsive members and for when we really need safety to be key.

[00:07:43] Authoritative leadership. This is what I am. It also sometimes is called visionary leadership. And this is fair, but firm. Provides clear instructions, solicit some input and carefully monitors behavior. Some famous authoritative leaders, JFK, Bill gates, Martin Luther King Jr. And where we see authoritative leadership really come into play is when new directions are needed. That is where this is the best leadership style to use. Provides a lot of clarity can help you to form that shared vision. And it can also help people get in line with heading on that vision and that path.

[00:08:31] Affiliative leadership. This is the good buddy. Feels people come first and tasks come second. These leaders really like to create harmony. They care about people. They want to be liked. They tend to provide little direction.

So if you are a fan of the TV show The Office, this is Michael Scott, right? He wants to be liked by his employees. Other famous leaders that we see that are affiliative leaders include the Dalai Lama and Joe Torres. Who's a very famous coach for the New York giants who used to give positive feedback about his team, no matter whether they won in loss, in the columns of newspapers, every single game.

Where affiliative leadership can really come in is when we're mending rifts. When we're handling stress farm families, we often have family members that are involved. So sometimes making sure that we take care of those emotions and keep that family harmony. Because we're facing this dual role of, we are a family, but we're also a business.

[00:09:42] Democratic leadership, the let's vote. Participatory style, they want to elicit feedback from their followers, use that feedback to make decisions. They might hold many meetings. They don't like disciplining employees and they feel that supervision or very detailed instructions are not necessary. So where this tends to work best is when we need to get group buy-in when there's no clear way forward and we want to make sure that everyone has the option to voice their opinion. A pro of this is that you're leveraging the expertise of those that are in the room, leveraging the expertise in the opinions of your employees, your coworkers, perhaps other family members. But sometimes this can cause in decisiveness, it can be hard to make a decision. Some famous leaders that are democratic Eisenhower and Mandela.

[00:10:41] Pace setting leadership, follow me leadership. They like to perform technical activities. They have very high standards for themselves and they expect others to do the same. They are setting the example of what it means to thrive and be successful in this business.

And they expect employees to meet that bar or exceed that bar. And if they don't, sometimes they will take away responsibilities from those employees, some downsides of this, that interpersonal relationship, the group harmony isn't necessarily as much a concern for pace setting leaders. So what is this best for?

This is best for when you need a motivated, competent and independent team. If on your farm, you need to know that an employee can fully handle the dairy herd and you are going to handle the crop. This is where pace setting leadership might work well.

[00:11:42] Last but not least our coaching leadership style this is the developer, the delegator. They develop their employees. They have high standards of performance and they allow flexibility in setting goals and completing tasks. So when we think about our coaching leaders, they connect personal dreams with their organization dreams. They encourage employees to feel like they are a part of the company and they really build on their abilities and they build on employee loyalty. But if it's done poorly, it can look like micromanaging. Where this leadership style tends to work best is building long-term capabilities of your employees and some famous coaching leaders, Gandhi and Steve Jobs..

We've pretty quickly here touched on the six different types of leadership. And if you filled out that leadership questionnaire, you will see that it says A through F and they just happen to follow the exact order that we talked about. So A is our coercive, which is our protect and ensure safety.

B is our authoritative train chalk the field, correct. C is our affiliative build trust show that you care really focus on group harmony. D democratic involve and empower eliciting group input to make those decisions. E is our pace setting lead the way be the role model, expect them to meet that bar or exceed it.

And then F is our coaching teaching encouraging and developing the skills of our employees. As we're going through these one, or maybe more of these resonated with you, there is no right or wrong leadership style. And you may find that all of these apply to you in different situations in different points in times.

But knowing these can help us to understand what style we're using, what situations these might be best for, and also thinking back to what Nathan had said earlier, how do these play out with our informal leaders and how are we encouraging our employees to lead from any position?

There is no wrong or right here, these just tend to be what we fall to. These are our preferences, we may prefer one leadership style. That doesn't mean that we can't use others. And that doesn't mean that there won't come times when we need to use others. That just tends to be the one that we most heavily rely on.

Nathan Hulinsky:

[00:14:25] Yeah that was a great summary, Amber. But we just want to highlight again, depending on your preference, these comments might be viewed differently by others. Everyone has a different viewpoint. Again, embrace those differences. No, as being beneficial and then treat your employees as a value team member. Treat everyone with respect is a pretty good darn place to start.