

Impact of Two Training Implementation Plans on Post-Training Competency Expression of Personnel on Farm

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Introduction

Training personnel is an essential part of ensuring competency expression, engaging employees, creating a safe workplace, and developing a workplace that people want to stay^{1,2,8,9}. Proper implementation of health and welfare programs by production managers and veterinarians is achieved when integrated with a training program embraced top down by the Human Resources and production management team^{6,7}. In this training implementation case study, a traditional style of training program (Training Program A) was compared against a new training program (Training Program B). Impact on personnel competencies, engagement scores, and safety were measured. These results were completed by the system implementing the program to determine which training program to implement across their system.

Materials and Methods

Training Program A was the traditional program utilized in this pork business. In this program, farm managers were required to use the system's existing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) booklet to train staff. Training Program A had a 12-week training guide for each area: Breeding, Farrowing, Nursery, Finishing. Employees were trained in the area they worked, and if they stayed in that area, cross-training did not occur. Each week of the training had specific tasks that needed to be taught according to the SOP, but teaching method was left up to the manager. Typically, managers would read or talk through the SOP's verbally; and as needed, demonstrate in barn, and provide follow up specific to them or customized to the situation. A check in with each employee was done after 12 weeks to see if things were going ok.

Training Program B used online learning management software, Pork Avenue Training Portal (delivered by AgriSchool Party Lmt and created by AgCreate Solutions)⁵. This program follows a measured "See it, Do it, Teach it" philosophy. Assets consist of videos followed by simulations of desired end skills, graphical SOP's and In Barn Verification Experiences. All learning experiences are assigned on online learning management software which records video and simulation completion as well as completion of the in-barn verification experience to an individual's transcript.

For Training Program B, the system's hog training manager created a custom 26-week orientation curriculum within Pork Avenue choosing 40 of the 120 learning experiences to support and help drive understanding of the system's existing SOPs. He designated and trained 2 service people outside of the farms on how to do the in-barn verification of competencies. Lessons were assigned and when completed, the service people trained to verify skills went to the barn and made sure employees knew how to physically do the task in a safe manner and verify employee understanding of the why behind the process. Additional lessons in the program were subsequently assigned depending on the employee's role in the program. For example, farrowing personnel were assigned more farrowing lessons and wean to market personnel were assigned more wean to market lessons, etc.

Over 100 employees were enrolled in Training Program B for an average 8.6 months. The employees enrolled were new employees in the system and competency expression was compared to over 500 employees of a wide variety of experience levels in the system.

For Training Program B, on average each employee was assigned 59 learning experiences on average over an 8.6-month period. On average, 46 lessons were started and 43.8 were completed yielding a 95% completion rate once lessons were initiated. Over this period 5.1 lessons were completed per employee per month on average. In addition to the learning experiences online, each employee over the first 26 weeks, received over 6 hours of one on one verification following the in-barn verification checklists.

To measure impact in this case study, verifiers compared testing results and observed for physical expression of competencies on farm. To compare the programs, verifiers

chose 70 key competencies they wanted to see in action on farm. In Training Program B, employees saw these competencies listed on their In-Barn Verification Checklists, but did not know which competencies were being measured in the Training Program efficacy evaluations. For each competency chosen, correct expression was either "right" or "wrong." The farm's total competency ranking was listed as a percent of competencies being implemented physically on farm.

Engagement scores were measured using Gallop's Q12 program in Q1 of 2017. Re-measurement is scheduled in Q4 of 2017, but not completed across all farms at the time of this publication. Safety impact was measured by the number of reported injuries. Research shows that businesses with higher engagement scores are on average 18% more productive, 12% more profitable, and experience a 62% reduction in work related accidents. More engaged employees also have 27% lower absenteeism and are 31% less likely to leave the organization. "Gallup's employee engagement work is based on more than 30 years of in-depth behavioral economic research involving more than 17 million employees."^{2,9} Safety impact was measured by recording reported injury incidents across all employees.

Results

For expressed competency, Training Program A achieved a 59% level of competency. Training Program B achieved over 85% on competency. This was a 26-percentage point increase over Training Program A.

Engagement scores were trending upwards at the time of this publication.

Safety has been a long-term focus of this company. At the time of measurement, 6 months post implementation of the training program, zero injuries had occurred across the whole system.

Discussion and Conclusion

The science of how adults learn suggests that a "See it, Do it, Teach it" program is necessary to achieve physical expressions of competencies. Research shows that, on average, employees can express competencies on about 10% of what they read and 20% of what they hear^{6,7}. The managers efforts on Training Program A did increase competency expression from these levels to a 59% competency expression on farm. However, this study shows that utilizing programs like Pork Avenue that offer and measure the "See it, Do it, Teach it" experiences had significant impact on competency expression on farm raising it 26 percentage points above the farm's traditional level. This system used the study to determine whether to enroll the rest of their employees in the program. Post study, the system has decided to enroll all 600 employees in Training Program B.

Of note, this system decided to have people outside of the farms to do In Barn Verifications. They felt that managers were often anxious to get people moving on tasks. The 3rd party eye, helped them make sure the employee was truly able to physically do the task on farm according to their desired competency expression. Other systems implementing Training Program B utilize designate supervisors or managers for In Barn Verification experiences with good success.

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