Get'er Done for High Level Return:
Getting the Fundamentals Right

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Introduction

The past few years have taught us many things, the most important of which is: We need people to make pigs. We need people in barns doing extraordinary things every day . . . ordinary folks, like you and me. To get these fundamentals done day in and day out, it is important that we reflect on the pork business structure and how that structure impacts effective communication and training. Truly effective communication and training enables us to get the fundamentals done day in and day out. Without it, we will not be able to "get 'er done."

I remember the first time my husband tried to teach me how to ski. At the time we were dating, and we were headed out to a mountain in the Northwest. He was quite confident that I was going to "be a natural." We got geared up and went out there, and he spent about 15 minutes with me. He showed me how to turn. He kind of showed me how to stop, and we did a little bit of skiing on a bunny hill and he said, “Okay, let's go on up!” So, we hopped into that lift and headed up. We kept going higher and higher and higher and I began to get a little nervous. It was on the way up that I realized that I noticed a few signs that had black diamonds on them and my nervousness changed to significant worry. I wasn’t completely terrified out of my mind until I saw what I had to be able to do to even get off the lift. Clearly, I had to be able to know how to ski! And not just kind of. I needed to know how to ski well. All these people ahead of us were getting up effortlessly, standing up, skiing skillfully, beautifully down the slope to the beginning of the real slopes where they would start their descent on this black diamond, and I had no idea what to do.

We approached and I kind of closed my eyes (this was helpful) and when it was my turn the lift stood me up and I amateurishly attempted to maneuver down the hill. Of course, I wiped out and rolled sending both skis flying down
the hill ahead of me and had a huge amount of trouble trying to get up. Meanwhile all these other people were getting off the lift and skiing around me and past me on both sides. They finally placed an "announcer guy" to direct traffic around me. "Woman down! Woman down!", he called repeatedly until I was able to roll out of the way. It was a horrible experience, and it wasn't over yet. I still had to get down the mountain! I shuffled my already sore self to the starting point, and my husband started on down. And I followed . . . Zoom, crash! Zoom, crash! All the way down until I couldn't stand it anymore and finally, I was so bruised and frustrated, I crawled down the rest of the hill on my bottom, crying. Completely defeated.

You can imagine my terror, seven years later, when I was invited to give a talk at Pig Ski down in Colorado. All I could think about was how everyone was going to be skiing, having a great time, and I was just going to be in perpetual terror and once again make a fool of myself. But a little voice said, “Just try again. You can do it.”

So I went and signed up for a ski instruction school. I'm not usually a nervous person but I was actually shaking as I walked up towards my class! When I approached the instructor, she said, “So what is your ski experience?” With a small tremble in my voice, I began to explain, “Well seven years ago I went to the slopes and my husband tried to…” And she said, “Oh you’re in that group.” And she pointed over to a group of ladies whose “significant others” had tried to teach them how to ski. They called it the "Trauma Group."

We all got a good laugh out of it and we were thankful when she started out with the basics. She talked about the slopes, she talked about our skis, and she talked about how to move our legs. She very carefully took us through every single step that we needed to understand, and then she gave us practice at it. She let us practice it in a gentle environment until we really felt confident. She verified that we could do it, over and over again, in a simple environment before she moved us up to the next level. We went to a green slope next, and she was right there with us to coach us if we needed her. Snow was softly falling; and we ladies, we slowly, but with basics behind us, maneuvered down the hill. Then she took us up to the next level, double green. It was beautiful! We had a wonderful time! We were a team, together, being guided successfully through a new experience and loving it!

Each of us didn’t stop when the class was over. Each of us got on a lift and went back up and really enjoyed our skiing experience. Our teacher told us a statistic, that 80% of first-time skiers never come back. She said in many cases, it often is from a bad experience or poor teaching. That a skier is often pushed beyond their level or they do not get the training they need.

We do this to people in the pig barns sometimes don’t we? We bring them in and we expect them to understand some of these simple tasks that we've
done day in, day out and understand inside out. And we don’t remember to acknowledge and understand that they’ve never seen it before or done it before. They need guidance and need us as their coach so that they can be able to understand why they’re doing something, so that they can do it correctly day in and day out. Because with proper training, we’ll teach them that what they’re doing makes a difference down the road, and then they’ll know and understand that the simple things that they’re doing day in day out will make an extraordinary difference in the life of the pig and the lives of other people interacting with that pig before it goes to market. They’ll know that they make an impact on pork quality, that they impact world health by how they treat the animals they are privileged to work with. We need to give our employees the background, the training, and the skills they need to deliver, to give them the desire to stay with us. We also need to do it to keep them safe. Let’s look at these statistics a little bit.

- **Injury Statistics**

*Figure 1* was provided by a pork production system in the U.S. and it covers the percent of injury types that they have experienced over a 5 year period.

*Figure 1. Injury types in pork production system* (source - Midwestern US Farm Insurance Stats, 2009)
What is very interesting is that a very common risk factor for injuries on pig farms is experience level. New employees fresh to the industry in this particular system had an average time of employment of only 41 days before their first work injury. The employees that had at least 90 days experience on a farm previously, on average, took 360 days before their first injury. Whereas employees with more experience, that had worked more than 90 days on a pig farm before starting their next pig farm employment, took more than 360 days before their first injury. Additionally, average claim cost for new employees was double that for employees working for more than 90 days, indicating that their injuries were more severe in nature.

Of all the claims from employees, 62% of them came from these new hires with little to no pig experience. We must take training people seriously, because the pig barn, when you don’t know what you’re doing and you’re not familiar with the environment, can be a dangerous place. Thirty-two percent of the injuries are from bruising or being struck with objects on the farm. This was often from the act of forcing or pushing or pulling, and most of the injuries were to a finger or to a hand. Twenty-four percent of the injuries are through contact with hogs. These injuries were due to animals stepping on their feet, pushing on them, or even biting employees. Sometimes, in the case of boars, these injuries were very severe. They occurred when the animals were typically overcrowded, stressed, or being moved inappropriately. In those circumstances, the employees were sometimes caught between gates, the pig knocked down the person, or they were not walking in a pen using the correct stance; the employee had locked knees and the animal walked into them.

Slipping and falling was 22% of injuries. This happened when employees were standing on gates or outside the farm with ice and snow. (You know, I’ve done this too, and it’s a silly thing to wear plastic boots outside in the snow. There are other things we can do for biosecurity). Lifting strains accounted for 8% of injuries. People feel like they need to lift more than they’re capable of, throwing out their backs. The rest of the injuries were to the eye, maybe splashing with irritated substances, or power washer injuries, or rashes and needle sticks. Needle sticks accounted for the lowest percent of all injuries, but they still did rarely happen.

Clearly, many of these injuries could’ve been prevented via training, training specifically directed towards being safe. It’s hard to get the fundamentals done day in day out if you’re injured, or if your employees are, on average, being injured within 41 days of starting work. This is something that as an industry, we must commit ourselves to.

So today, I want to discuss about some training ideas and particularly one particular program that does a very nice and thorough job at communicating a key fundamental, regarding identification and treatment of individual pigs. It
teaches this concept in a way that afterwards participating trainees have a desire and a drive to "get 'er done" day in and day out on the farm.

- **Pig Identification, Symptom Quantification and Effective Communication**

I first want to talk about an example of taking something that is complicated and making it simple . . . simple in a way that it is very easy to understand, easy to implement, and it’s easy to understand what to do. This training program was sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health, and so I definitely want to give them credit for helping fund the development and implementation of this training course and pork industry tool.

We all know that weaning is a stressful time for pigs, right? And we know that special care is warranted during that time. Early identification and treatment of pigs is a very important aspect of wean-to-market management that first 1-5 weeks in barn. Of equal importance is the ability to quantify the symptoms occurring in a barn and to quantitatively communicate the amount of symptoms seen to multiple employment tiers on a farm. How this communication is received is also of great importance. If the numbers are not effectively communicated to those employment tiers due to a poor communication style or inaccurate numbers, actions that are needed to maintain good pig care in the barn will not take place. The exercises and practice that takes place in the Individual Pig Care™ Course impact positive changes in Individual Pig Care™ (IPC) Trainers (those being certified at an Individual Pig Care™ Course); therefore, making a difference in individual pigs. This course takes these three very important aspects (pig identification, symptom quantification, and effective communication) and gives IPC Trainees experience and feedback on all three critical skills. The benefits of Individual Pig Care™ will only keep multiplying as it spreads across the United States, to other countries, and adapted to other species.

- **ABCE Pigs**

This program takes the somewhat complex concept of acute, sub acute, chronic, and finding and acting on the pigs that need to be euthanized, and simplifies it. It works through the details of figuring out how to get employees to more quickly identify the pigs that need intervention. Simplifying medically sounding terms like acute, sub-acute, chronic and calling them “A” pigs, “B” pigs, “C” pigs, and “E” pigs makes the concept more approachable. So let's explain what we mean by A pigs, B pigs, C pigs, and E pigs.
“A” *pigs are pigs that have high treatment success.*
- They may look like they are full of flesh from above, but from a side glance may have slightly gaunt flanks.
- They may be depressed, feverish, have listless ears, have dull or weepy eyes, or may have increased breathing or thumping.

We typically need to treat these pigs and leave them pigs in the pen. Treatment success is high, typically 80-90% respond positively.

“B” *pigs are pigs that have moderate treatment success.*
- They may have defined gauntness with thinner, slab-sided and beginnings of flesh loss.
- They may have uncomfortable posture with stiff or rounded backs.
- They may be depressed or feverish with rough hair, a soiled coat, exudates around the eyes, and/or listless ears.

We typically need to treat and pull these pigs to the fallout pen. Treatment success is moderate, 50-75% respond positively.

“C” *pigs are pigs that have a low treatment success.*
- They may have severe gauntness.
- They may have advanced flesh loss.
- They may be depressed with a soiled coat, rough hair, dull listless eyes with black exudates, and/or listless ears.

We need to treat and pull these pigs to the fallout pen and watch for signs of progress. Treatment success is poor; 20-40% response rate. If no progress occurs, these pigs need to be humanely euthanize.

“E” *pigs are pigs that will have no treatment success rate.*
- They are pigs that show inadequate improvement or have minimal prospect for improvement after two days of intensive care.
- They are pigs that may be severely injured or non-ambulatory pigs with inability to recover.
- They are pigs that may be immobilized with a body condition score of 1.

We need to humanely euthanize these pigs.
Individual Pig Care™ (IPC) Course

To understand the Individual Pig Care™ Course more fully, it will be helpful to be familiar with all of the people and their roles involved with the course.

Roles in the Course

**IPC Champions** – Lead facilitators of the Individual Pig Care™ Course. IPC Champions are specially skilled veterinarians or lay staff. They are the leaders and hosts of these courses and are responsible for ensuring course standardization. They personally certify and coach the people that attend their Individual Pig Care™ Courses.

**IPC Coordinators** – Certified Pfizer representatives that are trained to coordinate Individual Pig Care™ Courses. IPC Coordinators are in charge of ensuring arrangements for facilities, travel, and meals are complete before the course. They also receive and organize training materials that arrive in the “Meeting in a Box” shipment on site. In addition, they will coordinate the follow up between the IPC Champion and IPC Trainers after the course.

**IPC Trainees** – Key leaders in each organization that will be certified as a Trainer through the course. They are responsible for training and personally certifying Caregivers in each of their organizations using the techniques and methods learned in the Individual Pig Care™ Course.

**IPC Technical Experts** – The veterinarians and production staff that are certified to deliver the in-barn training section of the Individual Pig Care™ Course. This certification involves both technical expertise in daily pig care and also training on communication styles and methods. They must demonstrate the ability to give good immediate feedback.

Creating an IPC Course on the IPC Course Wizard

An IPC Course is planned and created by an IPC Coordinator. The IPC Coordinator utilizes an IPC Course Wizard to create a new IPC Course. The IPC Course Wizard is an online event planner developed to assist IPC Coordinators and the Progressus, Ltd. support team. It allows quick turnaround of supplemental materials needed to lead or host an IPC Course. Through the Wizard, IPC Coordinators receive all supplies for the course in a "Meeting in a Box."
Three Sessions

The Individual Pig Care™ Course consists of three steps. The first half day is pre-event training and certification of the IPC Technical Experts serving the course, which involves:

- IPC Technical Experts get orientated to key concepts taught and their role
  - Acquainted with the flow of the course
  - Eyes adjusted in barn to A, B, C, and E pigs

The second session is the classroom training for IPC Trainees which involves:

- Teaching the ABCE Pig Identification and Quantification, which is a classification system for sick pigs based on the severity of their disease symptoms
- Practice in identifying and flexing to different DiSC® behavioral styles and experience levels

The third session of the course involves in-barn training which consists of the following:

- IPC Trainees get practice identifying ABCE pigs and quantifying symptoms
- IPC Trainees practicing communicating by teaching this concept to others employment tiers that they would potentially work with. They must flex to behavioral style and experience level of the information recipient during this communication.
- IPC Trainees receive immediate and post-event feedback. IPC Trainees receive a certificate at the end of the course and become IPC Trainers.

Post-IPC Course

After an IPC Course, the IPC Coordinator sends all of the completed Quantitative Assessments, evaluations from each of the three communication exercises, and feedback surveys back to the Progressus, Ltd. team. Progressus, Ltd. then processes all of this data to generate Feedback Results and Coaching Sheets that are individualized for each IPC Trainee that attended the course. The Progressus, Ltd. team sends the following material by electronic and hard copy to the IPC Coordinator:

- **Feedback Results** – The Feedback Results are tailored towards each IPC Trainee and are handed to the IPC Trainees in person post-event by the IPC Coordinator.
Coaching Sheets – The Coaching Sheets are meant to help guide the IPC Coordinator in delivering the coaching feedback and are not meant to be given to IPC Trainees. In each Coaching Sheet, the coaching opportunities are summarized on the first page and the specific details and tips are highlighted in blue in the more detailed script that follows. The Coaching Sheets are for the IPC Coordinator’s personal use as a reference when continuing to follow-up with the new IPC Trainees on their ability to impact Individual Pig Care™ on farm.

Certificates – Certificates show the IPC Trainee’s personal responsibility and acceptance for Individual Pig Care™ and their new role as an IPC Trainer. The Certificates are signed by IPC Trainers and a Progressus, Ltd. representative, serving as a 3rd party verifier.

It is recommended that the IPC Coordinator schedule one-on-one meetings within two weeks after the course with each of the IPC Trainees to coach individual participants. The IPC Trainee can see their own Feedback Results to see how well the Veterinarian, Technical Experts and Caregivers thought he/she communicated. The Coaching Sheets should be utilized by the IPC Coordinator. The Coaching Sheets may be shared with the managers of these individuals as well. Only after these coaching sessions have been completed does the IPC Trainee receive and sign a certificate that certifies him/her as an IPC Trainer. Further follow-up with the Trainers occurs at 90 days and 6 months.

IPC Value Proposition

Improved relationships between the audience tiers:

- Increases training for key tiers of employment in the swine industry
- Increases the number of pigs needing treatment that are being treated
- Improves the timeliness of humane euthanasia
- Increase the value of pork raised by people who assume personal responsibility for Individual Pig Care™ and do Individual Pig Care™ every day in the barn
- Application of concept reduces mortality
- By implementation of timely effective treatment strategies, reduce the number of culls, deads, and lights thus increasing the number of pigs reaching full market value while directly impacting the key operational driver of mortality
Conclusion

We are ordinary folks who are capable of doing extraordinary things every day. Your action each day in barn, your choices each day in the barn make a difference. These actions and choices are linked to your responsibility to provide Individual Pig Care™ and verify that it occurs. It is the right thing to do™.

Implementation of the Individual Pig Care™ Course is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health.

References

Midwestern US Farm Insurance Stats. 2009. anonymous contributor