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New swine labor force assessment tool links employee satisfaction and barn culture to enhanced PW/MF/Y

New swine labor force assessment tool links employee satisfaction and barn culture to enhanced PW/MF/Y Labor management is one of the most challenging factors in profitable swine production. But new tools used to assess employees within their working environment provide valuable insights into optimizing worker satisfaction and performance – factors that directly and positively impact farm performance.

A study led by Summit Precision Production (SPP) engaged slat-level swine employees by using Cloverleaf and PXT assessment tools. Swine farms from companies representing five percent of the nation's U.S. sow production base participated in the initial study engaging farrowing and breeding workers, supervisors and farm managers. Results showed managers and others some surprising results.

More than age, more than experience, even more than pay, swine workers performance was driven by the value of job satisfaction in their roles. That was followed closely by doing meaningful work. The amount of pay was listed as less important.

What surprised some managers when factoring in the human element – a farm was more likely to have better pigs weaned per mated female per year output (PW/MF/Y) when considering employee satisfaction – over age, experience or even pay. In this study, the measurement of successful employees was tied specifically to each farm's PW/MF/Y.

"From a supervisor's standpoint you would expect experience to play a large role in supervisor satisfaction, yet we found that job satisfaction and culture was most impactful to performance", Jon Hoek CEO of SPP said. Worker satisfaction was also shown to drive whether a supervisor would hire that person again.

"As we historically look at individual farms, it is remarkable that nearly every one of them is not fully-staffed," Valerie Duttlinger said. "This underscores the problem that pork producers face and amplifies why these studies are so necessary." Duttlinger is Production Analyst for Swine Management Services of Fremont, Nebraska, which was chosen to conduct the surveys.

SPP focuses on harmonizing the livestock production environment including humans, animals, and technology. Hoek said, "Both the Cloverleaf and PXT assessment tools utilized by SPP offers swine producers a means to benchmark their teams, assessing their strengths and finding opportunities to optimize worker satisfaction. We look forward to helping producers advance their overall profitability in a means that ties the human metrics of job satisfaction, culture and engagement to real results in increased productivity."



SPP is leading the way to deploy new strategies and tactics that take animal production further than current technology can deliver. “We currently measure group performance metrics like rate of gain and feed efficiency. Now we can factor in the human element and its impact on proficiency in the barn,” Hoek added.

Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) also provided support for the project. BI’s Kaylee Hillinger added, “At BI we believe in ‘value through innovation’ and initiatives like this bring value to all the stakeholders.”

Mark Hulsebus, commercial pork director for Provimi said, “Improving engagement and stockmanship skills of our pork industry workforce is crucial to the success of the U.S. swine industry. We are proud to sponsor this study with Summit Precision Production and Swine Management Services as we further our commitment to helping producers achieve their production goals.”

Central Life Sciences, National Pork Board, Pig Easy, Farm Credit of Mid America, Arm and Hammer, Swine Tech, and PIC also provided support for this study. SPP uses specialized and appropriate tools for these assessments to articulate human/animal relationships, which ultimately advances the animal protein industry.

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