Never stop learning, never stop improving

BY KEVIN SPAFFORD

My June 2015 column was well intended, but Dick Steele, chairman of the board of Peaker Services Inc., took exception. I’d criticized the normal review process and suggested, “A performance review should support the goals and expectations of the organization. It should encourage improvement and professional growth.”

Based on his experience, Steele offered, “Back in 1988, I went to a four-day seminar given by Dr. W. Edwards Deming. I had been doing performance appraisals for 15 years at that time, and it was making me sick. When I asked Dr. Deming about it, he said, ‘Just quit it; it’s a bad idea.’ So I did.

“Over those years, we have had some employees who do not seem to be carrying their share of the load, and we have talks with them. Some of those persons have left the firm, and some have stayed.”

Deming is credited with formulating the rise of industry in Japan following World War II, and America’s automobile industry during the 1980s. The following is an edited version of his 14 Points for Management, originally published in 1986 and paraphrased for farming:

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of production and service, with the aim to become competitive, stay in business and provide jobs.
2. We are in a new economic age. Management on the farm must take on leadership for change.
3. Eliminate the need for inspection. Build quality into all phases of production.
4. Move toward a single supplier for any one item on a long-term relationship.
5. Improve quality and productivity constantly, decreasing costs.
6. Institute training on the job.
7. Institute leadership. Supervision of management is in need of an overhaul, as well as supervision of production workers.
8. Drive out fear, so everyone may work effectively for the company.
10. Eliminate slogans and targets for the workforce that demand zero defects and new levels of productivity.
11. Remove barriers that rob the hourly worker of pride of workmanship. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed to quality.
12. Remove barriers that rob management of their right to pride of workmanship. Eliminate merit rating bonuses.
13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement.
14. Put everybody on course to accomplish this transformation.

Maybe it’s time to dust off the works of Deming and inspire a renaissance.

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