

# SWINE SOLUTIONS

SMART PRODUCERS, SMART SOLUTIONS



E-Newsletter

January 2018

## New Year's resolutions for 2018 and beyond

*By Jamie Pietig, M.S., Hubbard Feeds Swine Nutritionist*

For the professional livestock producer, the beginning of a new year is a time to set new goals. Typically, these goals are focused on performance values like average daily gain, mortality and increasing pigs per sow per year. I have been practicing this goal-setting activity consistently for several years and have found it to be invaluable. However, production or financial numbers on a sheet of paper is only one part of the big picture. There are other challenges we need to focus on and overcome to have a thriving and competitive business.

As a field nutritionist, I have the privilege of working closely with producers who share with me the most difficult problems affecting their businesses. And, as a stakeholder in a family livestock operation, I feel the same pain and frustration that my clients describe because we often deal with the same difficulties. This year, my New Year's resolution is to help find solutions for the three most common challenges facing pork producers: people, processes and perspective.

Unfortunately, I don't have a premix or feed additive solution for these particular issues. However, our core values at Hubbard Feeds instill a desire to work with our customers to provide solutions to their biggest problems, whether they come in a feed bag or not.

### Resolution #1: Developing employees

Our people can be the source of our greatest accomplishments and our greatest frustrations. Most farm managers are working very hard to keep employees happy and effective, but the breakdown happens when we lose direction and individual focus. Farm managers teach the value of individual pig care and focusing on pigs that need extra attention. Individual employee care should receive the same attention.

We need to train and communicate with employees individually and seek to understand where they are struggling in their daily work routines. Helping workers overcome their weaknesses and grow in new skills is not only an indication of good management, but strong leadership.

Mass communication, just like mass treating a group of pigs, can be ineffective. Some may need the medication, while others don't. Likewise, speaking to the whole group of employees tends to over-communicate to those who are excelling and under-communicate to those who are struggling.

Communicating the farm's goals, values and the importance of an individual's work is best done on a one-on-one basis rather than in a group setting.

*(continued on next page)*



Hubbard Feeds  
Mankato, MN  
1.800.869.7219  
[www.hubbardfeeds.com](http://www.hubbardfeeds.com)

## **Resolution #2: Process improvement**

In the middle of a project, how many times do you find yourself thinking, “There’s got to be a better way”? I’m certain this happens more often than we’d care to admit. Well-run farms actively seek out better ways to complete tasks and make them a part of their culture. The time and effort required to improve a process is worth the investment. Moreover, if you can get your employees to improve the processes they perform with their own insight and ingenuity, you have now effectively multiplied yourself several times over. However, this is no easy feat because managers and employees need to be open to change and committing the time to study a problem.

It’s not easy to implement changes, even ones that will be better in the long run. It may even be tempting to revert to previous methods and discredit the person making the suggested changes. Learning new processes or improving old ones requires patience, clear communication and commitment from everyone involved.

## **Resolution #3: Changing perspectives**

On the toughest days, when it feels like everything is falling apart, it is important to remember why we do what we do. For many, it’s a passion for agriculture and a commitment to continuing the farming tradition — not just for the immediate family, but also for those who depend on you for their livelihood.

Whatever your reasons, use them to carry you through challenging times. Trust that the process of continuous improvement will carry your business into the future even if you lose clarity on bad days. When I struggle or lose focus, those around me struggle, effectively multiplying the farm’s problems. The reverse is also true. Steady nerves and sharp concentration are contagious. You will find those around you will excel if they know they can rely on a confident manager to help them through difficulties.

Hopefully these resolutions spark inspiration on how to improve on more than just the numbers for a thriving business in 2018 and beyond.

