

Communication style encourages better operational management for women

AT A GLANCE

Women in Ag Conference encourages farm women to explore personal communication style to implement behavior change in operational management.

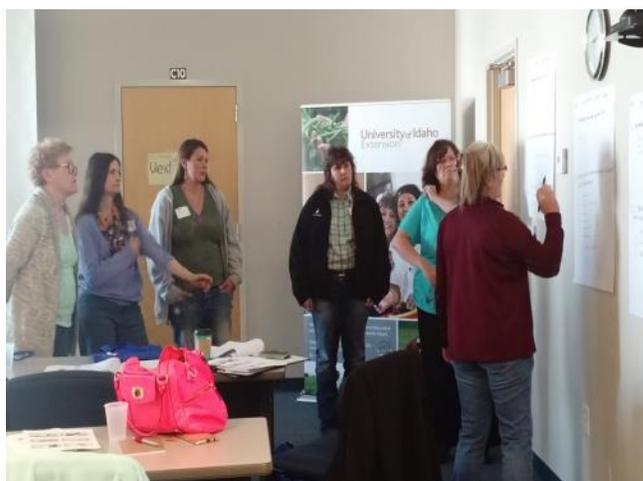
The Situation

Nationally, fourteen percent of principal operators of an agricultural business are women, necessitating opportunities be available to expand their professional skill set to reach success. The Treasure Valley's 13 percent representation reflects the national average, making it essential for University of Idaho Extension to offer opportunities to strengthen this proficiency area for women.

Communication contributes to overall efficacy of a workplace. Seventy to eighty percent of waking hours are spent conducting communication with 45 percent of this time applying listening, leading to the importance of quality interaction. When an operation's leader does not have the ability to effectively communicate with employees and outside resources, it affects the achievement the business may obtain.

Our Response

The 2016 Women in Agriculture Conference was a five-state partnership with Washington State University organizing the event with the theme: "POWER UP Your Farm!" Idaho found it crucial to serve the high demand from the large population in the Treasure Valley. Thirty-one females attended and participated in team atmospheres throughout the day's activities. Online webinars provided access to make speakers available, making facilitators critical in ensuring impactful program delivery.



Caldwell, ID Women in Ag participants take part in a hands-on activity discovering their specific communication style.

The DiSC profile is a personality assessment tool used to improve productivity, teamwork and communication. This was applied during the workshop and enabled participants to explore their favored personal interaction style and the type for those around them. At the Caldwell, Idaho venue hands-on activities were expanded to encourage attendees to delve into their personal selection, and that of their polar opposite. The intent was to elicit a better understanding of how they interacted with someone with a different style.

Program Outcomes

The 2016 Women in Agriculture program allowed participants to discover their personalized communication temperament. Once the individual's preferred communication technique was determined, attendees learned how to effectively communicate with other personality and communication styles. This was

accomplished by breaking attendees into communication groups to assess their strengths and weaknesses.

In groups, members were asked to put themselves in the mindset of an opposite communication type and deliver a message to the opposite group employing said group's preferred process of communication, expanding their experience of using positive communication techniques.

This site conducted additional hands-on activities directing participants to plan a vacation for an opposite communication group utilizing information gained during the DiSC assessment. This allowed attendees to comprehend and exhibit sensitivity to the needs of others. This skill is indispensable when directing numerous people with varied communication styles towards a central goal, as in the operations these women manage.

Post-conference evaluations indicate an overwhelming 94 percent of attendees responded yes to assessment questions regarding intent to identify, comprehend, and alter their knowledge level, personal communication habits, and approach to communicating with others. Attendees shared messages with reoccurring themes:

- "Utilizing each person's different communication styles to communicate effectively to all different types."
- "Understanding the DiSC system and how that effects my communication with others."
- "Communication is very important."
- "Understand and be respectful of cultural differences."

Participants indicated they intended to apply newly gained skills. The top five selections were:

- Myself
- Family Members
- Customers
- Prospective Clients/Customers
- Community Engagement

The Future

Due to attendance contributing to a successful 2016 Women in Agriculture conference in Caldwell, organizers are looking at options for a program next year. Participants gave suggestions for future topics and these will help mold the event catered to audience needs.



2016 Caldwell, ID Women in Ag participants share activity with audience.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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