

## Reflection

By: Jay Thurman

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This time of year always seems to help bring into focus the changes that have occurred not only this year but in years past as well. Many of the changes are positive, and some negative, but there is always change happening. It is an excellent time to evaluate if the changes happening in your business are positive and helpful or not. What is your vision? Are you taking steps to turn that vision into reality? If so, great! That is very likely the positive change that is happening in your business. If not, it is very possible that is why the negative changes you are experiencing are happening. Dairy operations, like many other operations, need vision and direction for everyone's sake. Ownership, managers and employees need to feel the purpose of the business, often this leads to "buy in", pride in the company, and an overall sense of ownership that nearly always results in positive momentum for the operation as a whole.

We have discussed several times in this column the importance of recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of your business and what that means to the success of your operation. Build on the strengths, limit the impact of the weaknesses, but most importantly you have to recognize what they are for your business. Taking time to actually reflect back and truly categorize areas you should exploit and build upon is valuable. How can your dairy be more successful next year by expanding those areas in which you have an advantage in? Before you can do that however, you must define what areas those are. Just as importantly is realizing what areas are costing your business the most. Once recognized, what can you do to minimize that negative effect?

The challenge we have oftentimes is actually taking the time to define a vision, and truly understand the strengths and weaknesses. Time is precious and we are so busy that taking time to ponder, meditate or reflect seems like a waste of time. In actuality however, that time could prove to be the most valuable next year when you make decisions based on experience that leads to better results instead of the same results all over again because you were too busy to learn from your mistakes last year.

Robert Frost asked, "How many things have to happen to you before something occurs to you?"

There is no doubt that we cannot control everything that happens to us. But there is nothing that can stop us from taking those happenings and learning from them and make better decisions in the future. Too often in business we paint ourselves in the proverbial corner by making decisions based on reactions to circumstances rather than being proactive and setting the path ahead of time. Reflect, recognize, learn and act instead of continually reacting to the circumstances and the results will show by going Straight to Your Bottom Line.

Merry Christmas to all and may the coming year be successful and prosperous for you.