



‘Have your say’ board joins the dots between leaders and workers

Placing a ‘Have your say’ board in the middle of the staff cafeteria has significantly increased worker participation for Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC) – providing a ‘hotline’ for people to raise issues with senior leaders.

The dairy genetics company employs around 750 full-time staff, rising to over 2000 workers in peak season.

As well as collecting and selling bull semen, LIC provides insemination services, milk sample testing and software to help dairy farmers monitor their herds.

A number of staff are based at the Hamilton head office, but others spend a lot of time on the road or on customer farms.

LIC has identified critical risks within its operation including: handling cattle; driving; and chemicals and cryogenics.

“We have a low incident rate,” said Stuart Irwin, the organisation’s Health, Safety and Environment Manager. “But we have been on a journey to change our health and safety culture, and to increase worker participation.”

“One of the ideas we trialed was a ‘We said, you did’ display,” said Stuart. “People could write up an issue and the leadership team would look into and post a response, including actions that had been taken.

“As a collective, we can provide a lot more ideas. To do that, you need a way for everyone to have their say.”

The ‘Have your Say’ board, was originally installed in the busy staff cafeteria for a three month ‘trial’ – and has been there ever since.

“It has meant additional work for the leadership team, but they were unanimous in wanting to keep it going, because it was so successful” said Stuart.



“The board has three columns. In the left column you can post an issue. In the right-hand column, leadership team provides an answer or reports on how we are addressing that. If it’s a complex issue, needing more investigation, we’ll put a message in the middle column providing a timeframe to come back with a response. If we can’t help, then we’ll explain that and give a reason.

“The idea was to create a direct line to the Senior Leadership Team on issues – including health and safety. We also provide sticky dots which people can put on any posts they also want answers to – so when you see lots of dots you know that’s an issue for many people.”

General Managers take it in turns to oversee responding to messages. Each has to take ownership of and see through any question posted during their two-week stint.

“Issues can’t be passed on,” said Stuart. “That ensures posts are dealt with swiftly. We have pictures of managers on the wall by the board and colour coding so everyone knows who is dealing with each question.”

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Examples of issues raised include a request for sunshades for outside seating and a suggestion for bird-proof mesh at windows, so they can be opened in hot weather, without birds flying in. These ideas can

contribute to improving health and safety – though the people who suggested them may have done so for other reasons.

“Someone also asked for flexible work hours and that got lots of dots. Flexible hours are already available but clearly not everyone knew. We responded by providing details of who to contact to access that. The person who posted the question is now working flexibly and a lot more people know about the option.

“It’s a simple concept that has brought great benefits; people genuinely feel their questions are taken on board and acted on and that they can make a difference. We have an intranet version for posts of a sensitive commercial nature, but the board in the cafeteria is more widely used.

“When you get into the cafeteria and see everyone gathered round the board, you know an interesting question has gone up. It’s infectious. You find yourself talking to others about posts.

“We are trying to promote a culture where things can be discussed openly with no hidden agenda and this really promotes that – it’s breaking down barriers. The approach is very collaborative, and can include ideas from contractors, temporary and seasonal workers alongside permanent staff. This is a difficult time for the sector, with the dairy downturn. We don’t have all the answers but as a collective we can provide a lot more ideas. To do that, you need a way for everyone to have their say.”

WORKER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

The best outcomes are achieved when a business and its workers work together on health and safety. Worker Engagement and Participation is about having planned ways for:

- > workers to give input on issues which will (or are likely to) affect their health or safety. This includes asking for and taking into account their views and
- > workers to improve work health and safety on an ongoing basis (eg by raising concerns or suggesting improvements).

This will help you and your business to make better decisions – and keep your people and productivity thriving.

KEY POINTS

- > Giving workers easy, accessible ways to suggest ideas promotes innovation.
- > Worker participation improves morale and team spirit.
- > Prompt feedback from management is the key to effectiveness.

For more examples and information visit [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)
