



A partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in these nine counties: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne and Wyoming.

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# THE DAIRY CULTURE COACH

*Helping You Manage Your Multicultural Team for Success*

## Communicating with Your Multicultural Team

If you're reading this newsletter, than you've no doubt struggled with communication on the farm more than once. The good news is that you're not alone, and there are things you can do to work towards lessening the communication difficulties. [UVA Professor Kristin Behfar conducted interviews](#) with leaders around the world to learn about their experiences in working with people from different cultures. A common set of difficulties emerged including lack of a common language and stigmas or stereotypes about different groups of people. Her research led to a number of recommendations that can easily be applied to the farm workplace.

**1. Get to know your employees as PEOPLE.** Put aside any stereotypes from pop culture. Small talk about family, sports, current events in their home countries, and other topics can go a long way towards establishing a relationship. With this in mind, it's important to NOT show preferential treatment towards one group over another, especially those that share your cultural identity.

Imagine a situation where a boss only offers the "preferred" day shift to American



workers, while the Hispanic workers are only offered the night shift. Perhaps the Hispanic workers are the only ones willing to work at night, but if they're never given the opportunity to work in the day, they might feel slighted, and be less likely to stick with the job for a long period of time.

**2. Minimize language barriers.** First and foremost, commit to language learning yourself. If you expect to continue to employ people who speak a certain language, do your best to gain at least a moderate level of ability to communicate. If you're going to be the constant, with employee's coming and going over the years, it's more realistic for you to learn their language than for every one of them to learn yours!

Next, encourage language learning for others. You could subsidize a language class, connect them with tutors (local or online), or teach them to use an app. Some examples are [Duolingo](#) and [Cell-Ed](#). If

### Vocabulary

- hurricane— el huracán
- migration—la migración
- protests—las manifestaciones
- certificate—el certificado
- recognition—el reconocimiento
- winter—el invierno
- holiday—un día feriada
- celebrate—celebrar

you're willing to make a larger monetary commitment, you might consider sending a higher level employee to an immersion program to help them learn more quickly.

When appropriate, engage translators to facilitate communication. Provide all written documents in your employees' native language. However, if employees have lower literacy levels, just translating written text to their native language may not be enough. Use pictures or drawings whenever possible, especially for standard operating procedures.

More specifically, try to **avoid excluding team members with your language choice**. If an employee doesn't understand you, try using a different word or explanation. Use pictures or hand motions to accentuate your meeting.

Use plain language and avoid idioms or slang which can be really confusing. Consider these idioms:

"Stop running around like a chicken with its head cut off" really means, slow down, and focus on what you're doing.

If a supervisor says "you'll pick this up quickly, it's a piece of cake", they mean simply that it's easy! No actual cake involved.

Of course, using and explaining some of these idioms can be a great way to build a relationship and help someone learn a language. It can be fun to give an example of a phrase in English and ask what similar phrase they use in their language. For example, to say that something is easy in Spanish, you say that it is "*pan comido*", or eaten bread, instead of piece of cake!

**3. Clearly communicate norms.** People need to know what to expect and know that they are trusted and valued in order to be open. To this effect, clearly communicate workplace norms with your employees from day one. You should lay out goals for their work, steps and processes for tasks. On a more personal level, explain business values and what is and is not acceptable behavior in the workplace. Tell them the appropriate way to bring up problems or criticisms, and continually encourage questions.

A common assumption I see on behalf of Americans is that everyone knows that two weeks notice is customary when

quitting a job. That's not the norm in other countries—it can range from one week to two months!

**4. Manage problems, quickly.** As problems arise (and they always will!), manage them quickly. Get to the root of the problem, and don't let cultural differences be the scapegoat.

As a bilingual individual on farms, I've ended up mediating more than one cross cultural misunderstanding or dispute. When people feel wronged, they naturally look to pass the blame. And it can be easier to do that to a group with cultural divisions.

Too many times I've heard the blame passed off on "the Hispanics" who don't understand English well enough to follow directions, or "los gringos" who are lazy. Those are the times when as a manager it's important to step up and show your team what you value in the workplace. If you let comments like that slide, it will only breed intolerance. Focus on people as individuals, not as groups.

I've given you a lot to think about here, but I can sum it up with the word "clarity." If you can make things clear and simple, you're more likely to avoid miscommunication that results in uncomfortable situations and hurt feelings.

How to go about achieving clarity will vary person to person, depending on their strengths and interests. But the simplest advice I can give you is to enjoy the opportunity to work and learn with people from different cultures. Without leaving the home farm, you can learn so much about the world. And the more you learn, the more you will grow in your ability to lead people from different cultural backgrounds.

*Did you like this article? Consider signing up for the [Supervisory Leadership certificate program](#). The first online course "Transitioning to Supervisor" will run for six weeks starting January 28. Participants learn essential leadership skills, such as: building effective work relationships, essential communication skills, managing conflict, leading a multi-cultural team, and how to build an effective workplace culture.*

## What's Happening in Guatemala & Mexico?

If you manage employees from other countries, it's worth investing the time to stay up to date with current events in their home countries. It gives you a better understanding of their background and what they and their families are currently experiencing. Here's a round up of recent news from Mexico and Guatemala.

**Hurricanes Eta and Iota** got little press here in NY, but the effects were devastating in Guatemala and other Central American Countries. The hurricanes' wind and rainfall destroyed homes and crops, leaving many people homeless and without food. The devastation has left many people with little left in their homelands and more reason than ever to migrate, according to a recent [NY Times article](#). Mexico was also affected due to the hurricanes, but the effects were not near

ly as intense as in Guatemala and other countries to the south.

**Protestors in Guatemala** [set fire to the Congressional building](#) in late November, while demanding that President Giammattei resign. This was in response to the 2021 budget which included cuts to education and healthcare, while increasing overall debt. The budget was later shelved.

Central American countries have been hard-hit by **the pandemic**. Mexico has one of the [highest mortality rates](#) of COVID-19. Both Mexico and Guatemala have [largely informal economies](#), where day laborers must leave home to work despite the risks. Mexican president López Obrador has been reluctant to provide any kind of stimulus to businesses or workers because of the debt he would have to incur. In September (before the hurricanes) the World Bank expected [Guatemala's poverty rate to increase](#) by as much as 6% in the coming year, due to the effect of lockdowns as well as a reduction in remittances due to the recession in the U.S. Remittances are monies sent home by Guatemalan migrants living abroad.

The New York Times, BBC, The Guardian and Aljazeera all offer regular English-language cover of current events in Mexico, Guatemala and other Central American countries.

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## Recognizing Your Team During the Holidays

It's one week until Christmas— are you panicking because you haven't planned anything for your employees? It's probably too late to get embroidered sweatshirts made, but here are a few other things you can do to recognize your employees for their hard work and dedication this year.

- Order takeout for your staff that will be working on Christmas or Christmas Eve.
- Put together a homemade meal. (Remember to keep things COVID-19 safe! You can buy takeout containers at Walmart to serve meals individually rather than buffet style.)
- Make up certificates recognizing employees for their years of service. (It's simple but reinforces how much you value employees that stick around. Plus, in my experience, certificates are something that these employees really value!)
- Put up lights or decorations at the farm to make things festive.



## COVID-19 Updates

As of today (December 18, 2020), the US has approved one vaccine for COVID-19, which requires a series of two shots. People at the highest priority are getting vaccinated right now. In October, the Governor released a [draft vaccination plan](#) for NY State. It prioritizes people that are at the most risk and essential workers, and among those gives highest priority to those in communities with more COVID spread. The additional prioritization phases are as follows. Based on this I would assume that healthy agricultural workers would be able to get vaccinated during Phase 4, though things may change.

Phase 1 / Fase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare workers (clinical and non-clinical) in patient care settings (ICU, ED, EMS top priority)</li> <li>Long-term care facility workers who regularly interact with residents</li> <li>Most at-risk long-term care facility patients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trabajadores de atención médica (clínicos y no clínicos) en entornos de cuidado de pacientes (UCI, Departamentos de Emergencia, prioridad máxima de Servicios de Emergencias Médicas [EMS, por sus siglas en inglés])</li> <li>Trabajadores de centros de cuidado a largo plazo que interactúan regularmente con los residentes</li> <li>La mayoría de los pacientes en centros de cuidado a largo plazo en riesgo</li> </ul>
Phase 2 / Fase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First responders (fire, police, national guard)</li> <li>Teachers/school staff (in-person instructions), childcare providers</li> <li>Public Health workers</li> <li>Other essential frontline workers that regularly interact with public (pharmacists, grocery store workers, transit employees, etc.) or maintain critical infrastructure</li> <li>Other long-term care facility patients and those living in other congregate settings</li> <li>Individuals in general population deemed particularly high risk due to comorbidities and health conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primeros auxilios (bomberos, policía, Guardia Nacional)</li> <li>Profesores/personal de las escuelas (enseñanza presencial), proveedores de cuidado de niños</li> <li>Trabajadores de Salud Pública</li> <li>Otros trabajadores esenciales de primera línea que interactúan regularmente con el público (farmacéuticos, trabajadores de tiendas de comestibles, empleados de tránsito, etc.) o que dan mantenimiento a infraestructuras fundamentales</li> <li>Otros pacientes de centros de atención a largo plazo y aquellos que viven en otros lugares donde se congrega gente</li> <li>Las personas de la población general que se consideran particularmente de alto riesgo debido a las comorbilidades y a las condiciones de salud</li> </ul>
Phase 3 / Fase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals over 65</li> <li>Individuals under 65 with high-risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personas de más de 65 años</li> <li>Las personas menores de 65 con alto riesgo</li> </ul>
Phase 4 / Fase 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All other essential workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Todos los demás trabajadores esenciales</li> </ul>
Phase 5 / Fase 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy adults and children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adultos y niños sanos</li> </ul>

Looking ahead to the next couple of weeks, consider the [CDC's recommendations](#) for staying safe and healthy. Travel and gatherings increase the risk of spreading COVID-19, and the safest bet is to celebrate at home with the people in your household.

Por el momento (18 de diciembre del 2020), los EE.UU. han aprobado una vacuna contra COVID-19 que requiere una serie de dos inyecciones. Las personas de más alta prioridad están recibiendo la vacuna ahorita. En octubre, el gobernador anunció una borrador del [plan de vacunación](#) para el estado de Nueva York. Prioriza personas de más alto riesgo y trabajadores esenciales, y entre ellos más alta prioridad para los en comunidades con más contagio de COVID. Los siguientes fases de priorización están arriba. Basado en eso, presumiré que trabajadores agrícolas sanos estarán vacunados en el fase 4, pero las cosas podrían cambiar.

En las semanas que vienen, tomen en cuenta las [recomendaciones del CDC](#) para mantenerse seguro y sano. Viajar y juntarse con gente que no viven en su casa aumentan la posibilidad de contagiarse con COVID-19, así que lo más seguro es celebrar en casa.



### Last Issue

Thank you for your interest in the Dairy Culture Coach over the past seven years! I've really enjoyed the opportunity to write articles specifically for you, farm managers working with Spanish-speaking employees. This is the last issue, as I'll be moving on from my position on the NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team in mid-January. In my new role with Cargill I'll continue working with farms in Western NY, so I'll be sure to run into some of you. Please keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Libby Eiholzer

### Última Edición

Muchas gracias por su interés en el Dairy Culture Coach durante los últimos siete años. Me he disfrutado mucho de la oportunidad de escribir artículos específicamente para ustedes, trabajadores de las granjas lecheras hispanohablantes. Esta es la última edición, como yo voy a salir de me trabajo con el NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team en enero. En mi nueva posición con Cargill seguirá trabajando con granjas en el oeste de Nueva York, así que seguramente les voy a ver a algunos de ustedes de vez en cuando. Manténganse en contacto.

Atentamente,

Libby Eiholzer



### Cornell Cooperative Extension

Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program



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### Check out our website!

<https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu>



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Newsletter Editor: Libby Eiholzer

Phone: 607-793-4847

E-mail: [geg24@cornell.edu](mailto:geg24@cornell.edu)