

# Talking the Talk

## Ideas for better farm communication



### Why care about farm communication?

Farm teams don't shift from family relationships to business partnerships by accident. It takes consistent, intentional communication with respected rules of engagement for everyone to bring their best work, ideas and vision to the table. Use the ideas and tips below to have productive, healthy conversations with your family, team and external partners.

### It starts with you

No matter how your farm team communicates, you can improve your speaking and listening habits. Ask yourself three questions before your next conversation:

1. **Is this the right delivery method?** Determine when text, phone call or in-person is appropriate.
2. **Am I ready to listen?** Reconsider engaging if you're tired, distracted or angry.
3. **Am I being curious or judgmental?** Be open and ask questions.

### Day-to-day communication

Instead of viewing differing opinions as conflict, think of your family members sitting on the same side of the table, collaborating to reach a common goal. Here are a few ways to help:

- Recognize fight, flight or freeze responses. If you're not in the right headspace, acknowledge that you want to talk, but need to walk away to re-focus and calm down. Make sure you set a time to revisit the conversation.
- Assume good intentions. Give people the benefit of the doubt and approach with a positive attitude.
- Ditch the side conversations. Think about who needs to be involved in the decision and schedule a meeting. Let your team work together for a more efficient outcome.

### Put it on the board

Use a whiteboard to create a weekly agenda. Work together to:

- Identify the top tasks
- Rank them by priority
- Assign a task leader and workers
- Create a list of any extra tasks that aren't your current priority but will need to be done

### Family farm business meetings

Before your next team meeting, set the rules of engagement that everyone will follow.

### Select all that apply:

#### BEFORE THE MEETING

- Consider who needs to be there – who are the key people who will be impacted?
- Schedule meeting at a time that works for everyone
- Ensure everyone makes the meeting a priority
- Create an agenda
- Assign a meeting notetaker or recorder

#### AT THE MEETING

- Put cell phones on silent
- Remove or minimize distractions whenever possible
- Everyone is respectful, engaged and contributing
- Approach as business partners, not family members
- Everyone gets an opportunity to speak – all goals and opinions matter
- Start and end the meeting on a positive note
- Think big picture, don't get sidetracked
- Recognize and celebrate successes
- Share positives and negatives
- Address problems directly
- Make decisions by logic, not emotion – take breaks if things get heated
- Plan to revisit but not rehash past decisions
- Involve a third party when necessary
- Establish purchase authority without approval, based on amount
- Ensure next steps, expectations and responsibilities are defined and aligned upon

#### AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up on action items and timelines
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## When should we meet?

Use this to determine the appropriate scope, focus and frequency for a successful meeting:

Scope	Focus	Frequency
Day-to-day	Organizing/operational tasks	Daily/weekly
Short term	Projects/budgets	Monthly/quarterly
Long term	Business planning/goals	Every 6 months/annually

## External partners

You need the same care and consideration when meeting with technical advisors and professionals as you do when meeting with your family and farm team. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Ensure everyone knows who the contacts are on both sides
- Prepare ideas, points and questions ahead of time
- Define clear expectations for the external partner and set appropriate communication to match those expectations
- Don't assume people know what you're talking about – be clear and follow up
- Look at things from all perspectives
- Determine and communicate what information you wish to keep confidential or private

---

To learn more, visit [fcc.ca/Transition](https://fcc.ca/Transition)