Creating Online Training Modules for Student Employees at the California Polytechnic State
University Dairy Using Train Trac

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Introduction

       At the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) Dairy, it is the responsibility of the current student managers to train the new employees. This year, Milc Group has come out with a new online training program for dairies to use. Previously they have come out with other online programs, such as their feeding module that allows dairy feeders to gather information in real time while out on the job (Milc 2018). Although the programs are not the same, they are similar enough so that we can learn the advantages and disadvantages of online programs. Having worked at the Cal Poly dairy for the past three years, and now as a manager, the author has taken it upon myself to create online training modules through Milc Group's new program. Her hopes are to eliminate inconsistent training from current student-to-student training at the Cal Poly Dairy.

Background

       Cal Poly consists of five different colleges. The University roughly has 22,000 students. The campus consists of 1,300 acres. Most of that acreage is used for agricultural purposes. Only 155 acres act as the core of the campus. Cal Poly operates on the quarter system. This means that the students are enrolled in a new set of courses three times a year versus the semester system of only two.

       Usually, the Cal Poly Dairy cycles through new student employees on a quarterly basis. Each crew has their individual crew manager and that manager oversees training the new employees. However, with the training system the Cal Poly Dairy has been using for years, important on the job information tends to be left out. As knowledge transfer occurs from quarter to quarter. With Milc Group's new program, Train Trac, the Cal Poly Dairy will provide consistent training for all future employees. Train Trac is an online program geared specifically towards dairies. Creating online training modules may prove to be difficult, but with research into Milc Group's other feed module and insight on student feedback, a new training system for the Cal Poly Dairy will enhance knowledge transfer and job success, safety, and animal welfare. The goal of these training modules is to keep them under two minutes each so students are able to complete the modules between classes. The goal is to have the employees repeat these trainings each quarter so that the information will always stay fresh in their minds.

Methodology

       The purpose of this project was to create training modules for the Cal Poly Dairy. The author's goal was to incorporate the safety aspect of dairy work into the modules as well. To properly obtain all the necessary information for the modules, the author first had to compile lists from the Cal Poly Dairy's written standard operating procedures. From here, the majority of time was used to gather video and picture content using a surface tablet that would later be used in the online modules. Once the content was gathered, it had to be organized into files for each module that was going to be created. The next step was to go through each file and edit the photos by adding text and diagrams to them and voice recording over all of the videos explaining to the viewer what was happening. A microphone USB was used to acquire audio for the modules. After the editing was done, it was time to upload the content to the online program.

       Once all the content was uploaded, the author then had to meet with Cedric Blanc, the Cal Poly Dairy operations manager at the time, to make sure all the modules were accurate and had valuable information in them. The next step was to go back and edit the modules. The author

sent out invitations through the online program to the rest of the dairy managers, which provided them access to review and give feedback on the modules created. The author then organized all the modules to ensure they were assigned to the correct employees. The final step was to publish all modules created so that all dairy employees had access to the uploaded content. To maintain file organization, the author transferred all the content to Cal Poly's Animal Science cloud storage.

Results

The author developed 71 training modules with 73 total at the conclusion of this project for a total of four and a half hours of training. After the training modules were released, the employees took a while to create their accounts for Train Trac, however, the ones that created their accounts quickly, also logged in and completed all their trainings. The author then met with the student employees who had completed their trainings and asked for feedback. The feedback gathered was positive. The employees said the modules were easy to follow and straight to the point. They also mentioned the online program was easy to navigate. The goal of keeping the modules around two minutes long was met, and the employees also noted that because of the short modules, it was easier for them to complete when it was convenient.

Conclusion

The creation of the training modules was a tedious and long process. All of the uploaded content was created specifically for the Cal Poly Dairy. The general feedback received was positive. However, the project does not end here. The next general manager of the dairy will continue to add to Train Trac. As the standard operating procedures of the dairy continue to change, minor changes may need to be made to the current modules, as well as continuing to create new modules such as onboarding modules. This will allow new employees to become familiar with the layout of the dairy as well as the people they will be working closely with. The modules the author created were only the beginning. They will be used for the Cal Poly Dairy's safety program to build upon for years to come.

Train Trac was a brand-new program which the author received a soft release on. This caused some minor issues throughout the project. Due to the program still being under development as the author was creating the modules, some content was lost and had to be redone. During the entire process there were minor glitches with the program that the author did not account for. However, by the end of the project, all the glitches were resolved.

Although there were issues working with the new program, the project was still successful. Milc Group's staff was a great aid throughout the entire process. When an issue with the program did arise, their technology staff was quick to fix the problem. The communication between the Milc Group staff and the author was effective and completed in a timely manner. The program itself was easy to navigate which made it easy to upload and create the training modules. With the way Train Trac is programed, the author sees potential in it to expand to other animal units on the Cal Poly campus. The author sees the benefits of using Train Trac as a training tool for all student training in any agriculture unit on campus. She presented the program to the unit managers of the other units. The idea was well accepted and the author plans to further pursue the expansion of the program to other units.

Citations

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