asking questions about estate planning. However, there are some ideas that can help decipher the cryptic advice. Moderated by Specht, a panel of estate-planning veterans and advisors consisting of Paul Neiffer, agribusiness CPA at CliftonLarsonAllen LLP; Joe Mayer of Mayer Ranch, Guymon, Okla.; and Don Schiefelbein of Schiefelbein Farms, Kimball, Minn., shared their expertise with workshop participants.

David Specht

Starting is a hard aspect of the transition, but all panelists agreed that starting sooner is better than later. Without forward planning, a rancher might have to make out a large check to the IRS, explained Mayer. "We couldn't afford to get into that situation."

Schiefelbein emphasized that it is not someone else's responsibility to get the process started. A health scare caused him to start the process with his family, and he recommended starting the process because you never know what will happen.

How do you start?

The panelists agreed that it is necessary to decide what you want out of your estate plan before you begin compiling your team of professionals to execute it. Figure out the ultimate goal of your estate plan, whether it is to minimize tax risk or to transfer the ranch into the shared ownership of siblings.

Once the ultimate goal is established, Neiffer explained, your estate lawyers and accountants can help figure out the best path to that goal.

When a family's No. 1 reason for estate planning is to eliminate taxes, the ranch usually sells fairly soon, Neiffer shared of his experience. "However, when the No. 1 reason is to continue the ranch for the family, those stick around and we can help them on a tax plan. We need you to lead off with what you want."

He added that while most starting an estate plan have a Type A personality and want to get things done quickly and efficiently, so are most of the advisors. With that many leader-type personalities, it is important to have a team lead and open communication between all team members.

Mayer added that it is common for ranchers to be secretive of what they own because they don't want the county tax assessor to find out, but without collaboration from everyone on the team, it can be a disaster.

The panel spoke during the business workshop Tuesday afternoon, Nov. 4. For more information about the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show and to listen to the presentations, visit *www.angusconvention.com.* AJ

Set employees up for success

"A manager's job is to create an environment in which people want to excel and then provide the tools, training and freedom to do it," said Burke Teichert, retired vice president of AgReserves and management consultant. He gave tips on finding, training and maintaining good employees to attendees of the business workshop Tuesday, Nov. 4, during the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show in Kansas City, Mo.

The four key areas to manage in a ranch operation are production, economics and finance, marketing, and people, he said. All too often, the people aspect is forgotten.

Finding good help is getting to be a difficult issue. Teichert suggested using advertisements in local papers or livestock journals, but he warned that they aren't as widely read as before. Ranch Web pages are good ways to advertise for help, especially if the website shows that it is a good place to work. A local network — like FFA chapters, other ranchers, and colleges and universities — can source help.

Burke Teichert

The recommendations of current employees are often the best source of new employees who will succeed at your ranch, he added.

Orientation and training have two major components: (1) the local community and (2) the workplace and job. The first is often skipped, but make sure new employees can be comfortable in their new community, Teichert advised. Show them or tell them about healthcare, shopping, schools, churches, banking and recreation. Make sure the whole family can be comfortable with where they live.

Training for the job is one of the most important things a manager does. Teichert warned against assuming an employee knows what to do or how to do it. That is unfair to the employee because it sets them up to fail.

Teichert recommended asking an employee how they would do something to find out if they do know and also to gain new ideas. The "show, tell, do" method works well to ease employees into new tasks.

He advised using on-ranch mentors, reasoning that doing so boosts the self-esteem of the mentors and gives the new employee the insight of a successful ranch employee. He also suggested providing off-ranch learning opportunities.

Training is important, because most new employees either quit or decide to stay within the first two to three weeks on the job. The problem is that most who decide to quit stay on the payroll until they find another job, but their productivity lessens. He explained that some reasons for quitting include:

- the job was different than presented in the interview;
- problems with co-workers; or
- insecurity in the job.

Successful employees are excited to do well and have buy-in with the ranch, Teichert said. "None of us can empower another, but we can encourage, facilitate and reward — and, thus, lead the empowerment of another."

Employees want opportunities to grow and improve, Teichert concluded. They want to be part of a learning, improving, winning and successful team with respectful, helpful and talented co-workers. They want to know that individual work is valued and that their ideas will be treated with respect and considered in planning efforts. Most importantly, he noted, objectives should be congruent with family lifestyle and personal objectives.

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