Employee Management *for* Production Agriculture

a conference by K-State Research & Extension

January 23 & 24, 2003

Embassy Suites, KCI

Kansas City

Conference Coordinators

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Thursday, January 23, 2003

9:00	Registration	Pre-Convention Area
10:00	General Session	Ballroom DE
	Welcome Sarah Fogleman	
	Improving Communication Sarah Fogleman	
11:00	General Session	Ballroom DE
	Conflict Resolution Gregory Billikopf	
12:00	Lunch	Hotel Atrium
1:00	Breakout Session Block 1 *See Attached Schedule*	
2:00	Breakout Session Block 2 *See Attached Schedule*	
3:00	Break	Pre-Convention Area
3:30	Breakout Session Block 3 *See Attached Schedule*	
4:30	Producer Panel Discussions *See Attached Schedule*	
6:00	Mixer/Reception	Hotel Atrium
7:00	Kansas City Barbecue	Ballroom DE

Friday, January 24, 2003

8:00	Breakout Session Block 4 *See Attached Schedule*	
9:00	Breakout Session Block 5 *See Attached Schedule*	
10:30	Break	Pre-Convention Area
11:00	Breakout Session Block 6 *See Attached Schedule*	
12:30	Lunch	Hotel Atrium
1:30	General Sessions **Transformational Leadership** Bernie Erven **Strategies for Taking it Home** Sarah Fogleman	Ballroom DE
3:00	Conference Adjourned	

Thursday, January 23, 2003 *Breakout Sessions*

	Salon C	Salon D	Salon E	Salon H
1:00	Designing Position that Motiviate and Challenge Employees Bernie Erven	Creating Documents that Reduce Risk and Improve Productivity Dorothy Lecher	Mars and Venus in the Workplace Susan Santos	Discipline and Termination Gregory Billikopf
2:00	*repeat above session*	*repeat above session*	*repeat above session*	*repeat above session*
3:00	Break–Pre-Convention Area			
3:30	Improving Professionalism Within a Business Sarah Fogleman	Handling Burnout and Revitalizing People Dorothy Lecher	The Family that Farms Together Andrew McCrea	Managing Employee Performance Thomas Maloney
4:30	Dairy Producer Panel John Smith	Beef Producer Panel Twig Marston	Swine Producer Panel Mike Tokach	Farm & Ranch Producer Panel Gary Kilgore

Friday, January 24, 2003 *Breakout Sessions*

	Salon C	Salon D	Salon E	Salon H
8:00	*repeat Block 3 (3:30 Thursday)*	*repeat Block 3 (3:30 Thursday)*	*repeat Block 3 (3:30 Thursday)*	*repeat Block 3 (3:30 Thursday)*
9:00	Dollars to Donuts: How to Compete for Agricultural Labor Sarah Fogleman	Legal Issues Kristin Oliver	Good HR in Bad Times Bernie Erven	Managing the Hispanic Workforce Thomas Maloney
10:30	Break–Pre-Convention Area			
11:00	*repeat Block 5 (9:00 Friday)*	*repeat Block 5 (9:00 Friday)*	*repeat Block 5 (9:00 Friday)*	*repeat Block 5 (9:00 Friday)*

Gregory Encina Billikopf

University of California Agricultural Extension

Gregory Encina Billikopf is the author of the book, *Labor Management in Agriculture* (1994). Since 1981, he has been employed with the University of California Agricultural Extension as a Labor Management Farm Advisor. Gregory has been a frequent national and international speaker in his field.

Research and teaching emphases have been in the areas of employee selection and testing, incentive pay and pay issues, conflict resolution, employee discipline, performance appraisal, worker motivation, supervision, negotiation skills and interpersonal relations.

Bernard Erven

The Ohio State University

Bernie Erven is a professor of agricultural economics and extension specialist at Ohio State University. His teaching, extension and research activities are in human resource management, farm management and business management.

His extension and outreach program focuses on labor management topics such as hiring, training, motivation, compensation, and performance evaluation. Dr. Erven also does workshops on communication techniques, handling the stress of management, time management, management succession, and human relations in family businesses. His work on these increasingly important topics has taken him throughout Ohio and to more than twenty-five other states.

Dr. Erven has degrees from Ohio State University and the University of Wisconsin and is a two-time recipient of the Ohio State University Award for Distinguished Teaching. He has also received several national teaching and extension awards for his work and expertise in agricultural economics and management.

Sarah Fogleman

Kansas State University Research and Extension

Sarah is the Extension Agricultural Economist for the Southeast Area of Kansas. She joined the K-State faculty in April of 1999 after receiving her Master's Degree from Cornell University in Agricultural Resource and Applied Economics. She graduated with honors from Oklahoma State University with a degree in Agricultural Economics in 1997.

While at Cornell, Sarah did extensive research with the Northeast Dairy Producer's Association (NEDPA). This groundbreaking research examined the compensation structure and employee satisfaction on NEDPA member farms.

She is an accomplished speaker with state and national awards to her credit. A native of Oklahoma, Sarah understands production agriculture and brings first-hand experience to any topic.

Thomas R. Maloney

Cornell University

Thomas R. Maloney is a Senior Extension Associate in the Department of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University. He received his Bachelors and Masters in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University. For twenty-seven years he has been an Extension educator teaching a variety of management topics. He is responsible for Extension programs in human resource management, labor policy and regulations. He has conducted numerous workshops and written a variety of bulletins on personnel topics relating to agricultural and horticultural businesses including employee recruitment, selection and compensation, motivation and performance management.

In recent years as the Hispanic workforce has increased he has conducted applied research and educational programs focused on managing a multicultural workforce. He is especially interested in cross-cultural understanding and team building in the multicultural workplace.

Kristin Oliver, J.D.

Gable and Gotwals

Kristin is an employment attorney with the Tulsa, Oklahoma law firm of Gable & Gotwals. A native of Oklahoma, she received a B.A. with Honors in English from Oklahoma State University in 1994. Since graduating from the prestigious Harvard Law School in 1997, Kristin has focused her legal practice on employment law issues in both state and federal courts.

Kristin is a highly sought-after speaker on the topic of employment law and is making her third appearance at the Employee Management for Production Agriculture Conference.

Andrew McCrea

Farmer and Professional Speaker

Andrew McCrea is a farmer, radio broadcaster and leadership trainer and speaker. He is a past National Secretary of the FFA and a graduate of the University of Missouri. After earning his degree in agriculture, he returned to the family farm north of Maysville to help manage the operation with his father.

In 1996 he began producing a radio feature called "The American Countryside." Today the program is heard daily on a network of 80 radio stations across the Midwest. The program has also won an Oscar in Agriculture in 1998, 99, and 2000. This winter the book "Andrew McCrea's American Countryside" will be out in print. It is based on the interesting stories featured on the radio program.

He has provided speeches, workshops and leadership training for youth and adult groups in 49 states. He also volunteers as a Christian youth leader and pulpit supply pastor in northwest Missouri.

Dorothy Lecher

Prema-Lean Pork, LLC

Dorothy Lecher is the Human Resource Director at Signature Farms, LLC. The companies that have employer her services have a combined total of 200 employees. She was instrumental in starting a production training program. Always striving for improvement, her training team travels the Midwest with a completely mobile approach to training by using hands-on techniques and visual classroom materials. Another item on her long list of accomplishments is her collaboration with John Corya in developing a management training program. In the last seven years, the training program has grown to include several outside companies.

Dorothy has worked her way up through this company which includes managing at 1200 sow unit and has overseen production on several sow units and nurseries. With this production knowledge, she has a unique understanding of the challenges that employees face in the industry today.

She has been a guest speaker in many different arenas, including the Ag Innovator Conference, National and Midwest Pork Conference, World Pork Expo, and George Young Conference. She has advised several industry magazines.

Susan Santos

Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics
University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing

Susan Santos serves as Director of Patient Care Services Research at Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics, and Assistant Professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing.

In addition to these roles, Dr. Santos has concurrently served as Adjunct Professor at the Graceland University of Nursing (1998 to present) and Adjunct and Affiliate Faculty at the University of Kansas School of Nursing (1999 to present). Prior to joining the staff at Children's Mercy, she was Associate Professor of Women's Health at Graceland University of Nursing (1996-1998), Graduate Student and Teaching Assistant at Kansas State University (1994-1996), and Maternal Child Educator at Saint Luke's Northland Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri (1992-1993).

Conference Evaluation

How did you find out about this conference?

___ Mail ____ Radio ____ Newspaper or Magazine (*which one* _____)
___ Conference Sponsor ____ Extension Professional ___ Other _____

The length of the conference (1.5 days) was ___ too long ___ too short ____ about right

Would you, or someone from your business, attend another conference of this type in the future?
___ Yes, definitely ____ Maybe, if it's convenient ___ Probably not

Would you like to see this conference repeated in the future? If so, how frequently?

Does the value (quality and quantity of information) you received outweigh your total costs of time, travel, lodging, and fees?

Have you visited the conference website? Yes No

We intend to maintain the conference website for use as a general forum for human resource management education. What suggestions do you have for how it can meet your needs?

What other services and training can we provide for you on this topic (publications, videos, additional conferences)?

What general comments do you have about the Employee Management for Production Agriculture Conference?

What suggestions would you make to improve future conferences?

Please rate the Employee Management for Production Agriculture Conference On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is excellent and 5 is very disappointing.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

Please rate the conference sessions you attended based on content and subject relevance.

	Very strong				Very weak
Improving Communication	1	2	3	4	5
Conflict Resolution	1	2	3	4	5
Designing Positions that Motivate and Challenge Employees	1	2	3	4	5
Creating Documents that Reduce Risk and Improve Productivity	1	2	3	4	5
Mars and Venus in the Workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Discipline and Termination	1	2	3	4	5
Improving Professionalism Within a Business	1	2	3	4	5
Handling Burnout and Revitalizing People	1	2	3	4	5
The Family that Farms Together	1	2	3	4	5
Managing Employee Performance	1	2	3	4	5
Dollars to Donuts: How to Compete for Agricultural Labor	1	2	3	4	5
Legal Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Good HR in Bad Times	1	2	3	4	5
Managing the Hispanic Workforce	1	2	3	4	5
Transformational Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Strategies for Taking it Home	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide feedback for our conference presenters.

Bernie Erven: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Bernie:

Gregory Encina Billikopf: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Gregory:

Sarah Fogleman: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Sarah:

Thomas R. Maloney: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Thomas:

Andrew McCrea: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Andrew:

Dorothy Lecher: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Dorothy:

Kristin Oliver: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Kristin:

Susan Santos: excellent   good   average   fair   poor
General Comments for Susan:

Keys to Communication

Sarah L. Fogleman
Kansas State University

Introduction

The American swine industry is not experiencing any shortage of challenges. One major challenge revolves around the "people" aspect of the industry. The fact remains that no matter how many technological advances the industry sees, people will eventually have to implement those advances, leaving a business's success, ultimately, in the hands of its employees.

When thinking about the human resource challenges a manger faces, it's easy to recognize the difficulty in dealing with issues such as compensation, discipline, training, recruiting, selecting, and motivating a workforce. But no matter how varied each of these challenges seem on the surface, they all stem from the same root: communication.

Communication in the workplace is the single most important element in a successful work environment. From the small things like saying thank you to the huge elements such as communicating performance feedback, moving pieces of information throughout a business is essential for long-term success.

Remove barriers

There are several keys to communication in a workplace. The first is to remove any barriers to communication. An obvious example of this is the manager who tries to give an employee instructions while talking on a cellular phone with a bad connection. The employee hears about half of what the managers says because static is a barrier to communication. This is an obvious, physical, impediment to clear communication. But other barriers may not be so easy to diagnose. Bad blood between employees can cause one to skew what the other is saying. Misconceptions can also hinder communication, especially if all parties assume everyone is on the same page when they are not.

Maintain composure

An important key of particular importance when communicating is for all parties to maintain their composure at all times. Miscommunication can often be compounded when tempers flare out of control. When explaining processes or information, try saying it in several different ways, not just louder and slower. Remember, communication success is the responsibility of both the sender and the receiver. Maintaining composure can ensure that the message doesn't get lost in the translation.

Find a common language

In modern agriculture there is certainly a heightened awareness of the importance of working with people with different native languages. Whether those languages include Spanish, English, German, Vietnamese, or others, managers are aware of this challenge and, in many cases, making an effort to help the business deal with it. But most managers are unaware of the fact that each industry, business, town, unit, family, can and will have languages of their own as well. In other words, just because a person speaks English, it doesn't mean he or she will speak "pig." Even if you are dealing with a person who has extensive swine experience, if that person is new to a particular business it will take him/her some time to adjust to the "shorthand" that may be used in that operation.

Employee Management for Production Agriculture

Shorthand is a good thing. The ability of a workforce to finish each other's sentences and communicate detailed information in as few words as possible is one sign of people who know their jobs, respect their coworkers, and are incredibly important to business success. But shorthand can be very confusing to people who are on the outside looking in. Establishing a common language for a business is the first step. Teaching that language to everyone involved with the business is the second.

Establish communication as a core value

In every successful business, communication is something that is routine, expected, and rewarded. It is an ingrained part of the business culture and the people in the business see communication as one of the core components of their jobs. To improve the communication within a business, establishing it as a core value would be very important to the process. Managers should make the commitment to establish a communication system, complete with checks and balances to make sure information flows as well as it should. Also, communication should be included as a part of a person or unit's performance objectives. In addition, communication should be rewarded. Certainly, people who typically receive performance bonuses probably have excellent communication in order to perform so well, but making communication itself something that is rewarded will help reiterate to everyone involved in an operation that communication is a core value.

Utilize communication instruments

One common misconception about communication is that it has to be spoken. That is quite untrue. Some of the most successful operations in this country have employees who communicate constantly with each other without

ever saying a word. Identification systems, charts, records, and other signals or clues can allow one employee to tell every other employee who passes that way what has been seen or done. These tools are very important to the flow of information. Other communication instruments may seem more traditional and can require more effort, particularly on the part of managers. But they do show long-term rewards.

Written documents such as job descriptions and employee handbooks are essential for today's operations from not only a legal standpoint but also for effective management. By having things such as a job's requirements, expectations, and standards in writing, employees are far more likely to have a clear understanding of what it will take to be successful in a position. Likewise, an employee handbook that includes items such as the business's policy on sexual harassment and the details of the business's philosophy on animal welfare will, essentially, lay a business's cards out on the table. Employees who review the handbook will be informed of many important business policies in one place at one time. Again, this is favorable from both management and legal standpoints.

Perhaps the most underused communication instrument is the meeting. Staff meetings can be as long or as short, as frequent or as infrequent as they need to be but they must happen, if only to serve as an opportunity for all parties to be in the same place at the same time. Many managers consider this as a time to "circle the wagons" and allow everyone within a team to communicate face-to-face if only for a very short time.

Provide training

The most important communication that happens in an employee's tenure with a business occurs within the first thirty days. That is when the employee learns the culture, practices, and philosophy of the business. Without full

and complete training, most employees will fail. It is only a matter of time.

Of course, training is a time-consuming and frequently frustrating process. It is easy to ask a new employee to "shadow" current employees for a day or two, picking up key lessons along the way and then after a couple of weeks, call that person fully trained. However, that is not the best situation for the new employee or the business. It takes one full production cycle for an employee to see everything that is commonplace within the operation and one full year for him/her to experience the seasonal differences that are common within agriculture. After all, the situations an employee encounters during the month of July may be very different than those he/she will see in February.

The most important part of training is not the process itself, but rather, the communication between managers, existing employees, and newer members of the team as to what is going on and what can be expected, especially during stressful periods. New employees will need and want to be in the loop, if only to understand what is happening and how it will affect them.

Offer orientation

It is easier to correct a mistake than change a habit. Most managers will agree with this statement. An orientation period and process is the ideal time to stop bad habits from forming. This is the period in which items such as compensation elements, time off, tardiness, animal welfare, and other important issues are discussed. Every business should set some time aside for new employees to ask questions about the business, the terms of their employment, and what they should expect from their jobs.

Have a system for feedback and evaluation

Research has shown that feedback is the element of employee satisfaction that some employees struggle with the most.

The ironic thing is, it is the element of satisfaction over which employers have the most control. It is impossible to talk about the keys to business communication without discussing feedback and evaluation. Having a formal system for feedback, meaning a designated time when managers and employees sit across from one another and discuss performance, will ensure that this happens. Of course, informal feedback, meaning that performance is discussed casually whenever the opportunity arises, is vital to business success but, unfortunately, those opportunities are frequently missed when operations are short-staffed or managers have other, more pressing, issues to deal with.

What is the magic formula for feedback and evaluation? There really is none. It depends upon the personalities and philosophies of the manager, the employee, and the business itself. But no matter what that formula looks like, it should probably include both formal and informal elements. Like most aspects of communication, the hardest part about feedback and evaluation is simply doing it. It may be awkward. It could sometimes be tense. But it is vital if you intend to have a satisfied and self-sufficient workforce.

Communicate!

What is the hardest part about communication? Remembering to do it. Marriages fail, employees leave, friends grow apart all because people forget to communicate. The number one key to communication is just doing it, even if that means doing it badly. If there is something someone needs to know, tell them, show them, help them to understand. People aren't mind readers. They may be busy and they may be stressed but they will usually stop what they are doing to learn, to share, and to communicate when given the opportunity.

Employee Management for Production Agriculture

Conflict Management

Gregorio Billikopf
University of California

Wherever choices exist there is potential for disagreement. Such differences, when handled properly, can result in richer, more effective, creative solutions and interaction. But alas, it is difficult to consistently turn differences into opportunities. When disagreement is poorly dealt with, the outcome can be contention. Contention creates a sense of psychological distance between people, such as feelings of dislike, bitter antagonism, competition, alienation, and disregard.

With hired personnel and strangers, we may often try and put forth our best behavior. Out of concern for how we are perceived, we may err in saying too little when things go wrong. We may suffer for a long time before bringing issues up. This is especially so during what could be called a "courting period." Instead of saying things directly, we often try to hint.

But the honeymoon is likely to end sooner or later. At some point this "courting behavior" often gets pushed aside out of necessity. We may find it easier to sweep problems under the psychological rug until the mound of dirt is so large we cannot help but trip over it. Sometime after that transition is made, it may become all too easy to start telling the employee or co-worker exactly what has to be done differently.

It takes more skill, effort and commitment—and, at least in the short run, more stress—to face the challenge together with the other person involved in the dispute. Certainly it seems as if it would be easier to fight, withdraw, or give in. Yet in the long run, working through difficulties together will help us live a less stressful and more fulfilling life.

Fighting it out. The number and seriousness of workplace violence cases in agriculture seems to be on the rise, and farm employers can respond with effective policies and increased education.

Yielding. While most can readily see the negative consequences and ugliness of escalating contention, we often do not consider how unproductive and harmful withdrawing or giving in can be. Naturally, there are occasions when doing so is not only wise, but honorable (as there are times to stand firm). If a person feels obligated to continually give in and let another have his way, such yielding individual may stop caring and withdraw psychologically from the situation.

Avoidance. When we engage in avoidance, it only weakens already fragile relationships.

We often are too quick to assume that a disagreement has no possible mutually acceptable solution. Talking about disagreements may result in opportunities to strengthen relationships and improve productivity. Obviously, talking problems through is not so easy. Confronting an issue may require (1) exposing oneself to ridicule or rejection, (2) recognizing we may have contributed to the problem, and (3) willingness to change.

We can reduce stress, resolve challenges and increase productivity through effective dialogue. Such a conversation entails as much listening as talking. While effective two-way exchanges will happen naturally some of the time, for the most part they need to be carefully planned. There may be some pain—or at

least moving us out of our comfort zones–involved in discussing challenging issues, but the rewards are satisfaction and improved long-term relationships.

When faced with challenges, we tend to review possible alternatives and come up with the best solution given the data at hand. Unwanted options are discarded. While some decisions may take careful consideration, analysis, and even agony, we solve others almost instinctively. Our best solution becomes our position or stance in the matter. Our needs, concerns and fears all play a part in coming up with such a position. Misunderstanding and dissent can grow their ugly heads when our solution is not the same as those of others.

Several foes often combine to create contention:

- Our first enemy is the natural need to want to explain our side first. After all, we reason, if they understand our perspective, they will come to the same conclusions we did.
- Our second enemy is our ineffectiveness as listeners. Listening is much more than being quiet so we can have our turn. It involves a real effort to understand another person's perspective.
- Our third enemy is fear. Fear that we will not get our way. Fear of losing something we cherish. Fear we will be made to look foolish or lose face. Fear of the truth ... that we may be wrong.
- Our fourth enemy is the assumption that one of us has to lose if the other is going to win: that differences can only be solved competitively.

The good news is that there are simple and effective tools to spin positive solutions and strengthen relationships out of disagreements. But let not the simplicity of the concepts obscure the challenge of carrying them out consistently. Certainly life gives us plenty of opportunities to practice and attempt to improve. However, the foes outlined above take effort to overcome.

Tools for Improved Communication

Two principles have contributed greatly to the productive handling of disagreements. The first, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood," was introduced by Steven Covey, in Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.[1] If we encourage others to explain their side first, they will be more apt to listen to ours.

The second principle, introduced by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their seminal work, Getting to Yes,[2] is that people in disagreement should focus on their needs rather than on their positions. By concentrating on positions, we tend to underscore our disagreements. When we concentrate on needs, we find we have more in common than what we had assumed. Ury and Fisher suggest we attempt to satisfy the sum of both their needs and our needs.

Putting it all together

If we come right out and tell someone, "I disagree," we are apt to alienate that person. Successful negotiators are more likely to label their intentions, such as a desire to ask a difficult question or provide a suggestion, and are less prone to label disagreement.[3] Problems are likely, however, to increase if we put all our needs aside to focus on another person's perspective. The other party may think we have no needs and be quite taken back when we introduce them all of a sudden, almost as an afterthought.

It is necessary not only to understand, but for the other person to feel understood. Only now can we begin to explain our perspective and expect to be fully listened to. Once we have laid out our concerns, we can focus on a creative solution. If we have had no history with someone, or a negative one, we need to use more caution when disagreeing. The potential for a disagreement to be side-

railed into contention is always there. It helps if we have made goodwill deposits over time.

Involving a Third Party

Sometimes differences in organizational level, personality or self-esteem among the participants in a disagreement require the participation of a third party. For instance, one supervisor had resorted to bullying and implied threats to get his way. "I would have gladly tried to find a way to help my supervisor achieve his goals," the subordinate explained through her tears. "But now I am so sensitized, I am afraid of talking to him."

Telling employees to work out their troubles on their own, grow up, or shake hands and get along may work occasionally, but most of the time the conflict will only be sent underground to resurface later in more destructive ways.

A better approach is to allow employees to meet with a third party, or mediator (which, in some cases, may be a manager or the farm owner), to assist them in their own resolution of the conflict.

All things being equal, an outside mediator has a greater chance of succeeding. An insider may be part of the problem, may be perceived as favoring one of the stakeholders, and the stakeholders may be hesitant to share confidential information with an insider. If the insider is a supervisor, the mediator role becomes more difficult, as supervisors tend to become overly directive, taking more of an arbiter's role and forcing a decision upon the parties.

Mediation

Mediation helps stakeholders discuss issues, repair past injuries, and develop the tools needed to face disagreements effectively. Mediators may help participants glimpse their blind spots, broaden their perspectives, and even muddle through the problem-solving process.

Yet, successful mediators remember that the challenges are owned by the stakeholders and do not attempt to short-circuit the process by solving challenges for them.

Mediators facilitate the process by:
- Understanding each participant's perspective through a pre-caucus.
- Increasing and evaluating participant interest in solving the challenge through mediation.
- Setting ground rules for improved communication.
- Coaching participants through the joint session.
- Equalizing power (e.g., between persons in different organizational levels).
- Helping participants plan for future interaction.

Understanding each participant's perspective through a pre-caucus
The pre-caucus is a separate meeting between the mediator and each stakeholder before the stakeholders are brought together in a joint session. During the pre-caucus the mediator will briefly explain the issue of confidentiality and the mechanics of the mediation process so stakeholders will not be surprised or have a sense of being lost. The mediator also should offer stakeholders the opportunity for regular caucusing (a meeting away from the other stakeholder) any time they feel a need for it. It is important that stakeholder control is emphasized throughout the process. Participants should not agree on something just for the sake of agreement. If there are yet unmet needs, these should be brought up. Sometimes, a few changes in a potential solution can make the difference between an agreement that will fail or succeed. The pre-caucus provides each stakeholder an opportunity to be heard and understood. One of the reasons why conflict situations are so challenging, is

the natural tendency of stakeholders to each want to express their respective perspectives first which to some degree takes place in the pre-caucus. The more deep-seated and emotional the conflict, the greater this need.

Separating the people from the conflict.

By placing the blame on the conflict itself, the mediator allows the stakeholders to save face and slowly distance themselves from the conflict-saturated story. Such a situation can help stakeholders detach themselves from the conflict long enough to see that each has a choice as to whether he wants to continue feeding the conflict.

Increasing and evaluating participant interest in solving challenge through mediation.

Sometimes individuals may be in denial about the negative effect that contention has in their lives. One manager claimed that he just got angry and exploded, but that his anger did not last long. He explained that he did not hold grudges, that by the next day he had put aside any bad feelings for the other person. During a mediation session this same manger admitted that a recent confrontation with the other stakeholder had made him so angry it left him sick for a couple of days. Part of the role of the mediator in meeting individually with each stakeholder is to help individuals visualize a life without that stress.

Setting ground rules for improved communication

One of the important roles of a mediator is to help stakeholders who have crossed the line to get a second chance at a relationship. If we have decided to change our behavior, it helps to clearly state our intentions ahead of time, so that our new and corrected behavior is not misunderstood.

Overly vague or broad statements such as, "You are inconsiderate," or,

"You are overbearing," do little to facilitate mutual understanding. Name-calling and the use of other labels can increase contention. Stakeholders may also look for ways to enlist even theoretical others into supporting their views. They may attempt to inflate the importance of their opinions with such statements as, "everyone else agrees with me...." or discount the opinion of others by speaking of their experience: "In my twenty years of experience ..."

Participants need to talk without putting each other on the defensive or coming across as accusatory. Especially when under the stress of a conflict, people will be quite sensitive to intended and non-intended statements of double meaning. A critical role for the mediator may be to ask for clarification or coach stakeholders in properly reflecting statements.

Coaching participants through the joint session.

The time has come to bring both stakeholders together into a joint session. A mechanical aspect to mediation that is extremely powerful is the seating arrangement. Have the two parties sit facing each other such that they are in a position to have good eye contact, yet making sure there is enough space between them so their personal space is not violated.

The mediator can also encourage participants to call each other by name, to be specific in their agreements, to help question potential landmines, and to encourage stakeholders to recapitulate what seems to have been agreed upon. When dealing with more difficult challenges, part of the role of the mediator is to keep the parties from becoming discouraged by showing them how far they have progressed.

Separating position from needs, in such a way that parties attempt to understand each others needs is another mediation pillar.

Negotiation will not be satisfactory when a person is more intent in:

- punishing another rather than coming to an agreement or modifying future behavior
- winning rather than solving the challenge

Sometimes negotiation is attempted but people's basic needs are incompatible. This may be especially so when no distinction can be made between a person's need and her position.

When negotiation has failed—for whatever reasons—a clear need for resolving the dispute through arbitration may develop. Bush and Folger suggest, however, that if a door is left open for continued conversation, and if individual empowerment and mutual recognition have taken place, then mediation was not a failure. Much more of a failure, they argue, is for a mediator to be so focused on having stakeholders come to an agreement that the agreement is forced, reducing the chances that it will be long lasting.[14]

Equalizing power

Participants may bring different amounts of power into a situation. As long as both are interested in negotiating a solution, power is essentially equalized. The effective mediator helps parties listen and communicate with each other. You may also need to draw out an employee who is having difficulty expressing himself.

Helping participants plan for future interaction

It is easier for employees to improve communication when aided by a competent mediator. Part of the responsibility of the mediator is to help employees anticipate some of the challenges they will face in the future. One difficulty is to take the time to listen and communicate. Principal among the needed skills, is for sensitive listening. It is difficult to always be on the alert for such sensitive

listening and interaction as has been discussed throughout this paper.

It sometimes takes years for employees to get into a pattern of negative interaction. It is unlikely that one session will cure this no matter how outstanding the mediator or the participants involved. One or more follow-up sessions with the mediator may help participants refine skills and evaluate progress made.

Arbitration

The supervisor as an arbiter may listen to complaints but, at the end, will make a judgment that the employees are expected to follow. It may be clear from the outset that employees expect the supervisor to take the role of an arbiter. Or, it may become increasingly evident as mediation is taking place, that an arbiter will be needed. The supervisor needs to clearly communicate his role. If the role changes, workers need to understand that, too.

A supervisor who arbitrates with fairness is more apt to be respected by employees in the long run. After difficulties are worked out, employees often find that their relationships have been strengthened.

Summary

Wherever there are choices to be made, differences may provide challenges or opportunities. One difficulty is the possibility that differences will result in increased contention. Supervisors may have to act as mediators and arbitrators from time to time. The advantage of mediation is maintaining responsibility for problem solving and conflict resolution at the level of those who own the challenge. Selecting an outside mediator often makes sense.

Several roles taken on by the mediator include understanding each participant's perspective; setting ground rules for improved communication; coaching participants on effective interaction styles; equalizing power; and

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helping participants plan for future interaction.

When the supervisor acts in the role of an arbitrator, it is more important to make a fair judgment than to try to please all workers involved.

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Transforming Your Employees and Business

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Introduction

This conference has made clear that managers have many choices to make about employee management. These choices require managers to consider the pros and cons of making changes. In some cases, the change would be relatively minor. More often, the change would take substantial time and energy with significant risk. Not all ideas for improving employee management actually have the intended outcome.

This concluding general session of the conference is intended to direct your attention to yet another choice that you have about leading, delegating and coaching. The choice is whether to become a transformational manager or continue with a more traditional approach to employee management. You can continue to fine-tune your employee management or you can transform your leadership and employees.

I often hear managers lamenting their employee problems. "My biggest problem is labor." "Employees frustrate me more than anything else." "People will only work hard to take care of what is theirs." It is clear that managers making these comments are not enjoying employee management even though it is an essential part of their overall management responsibilities. For them and many other managers, people problems simply go with being a manager. More discouraging, managers making such statements have little hope for things ever being much better in the people part of their businesses.

On the other hand, I sometimes hear statements such as: "I wouldn't trade my people for anybody else's." "We just don't have any serious employee problems." "We are where we are because everybody that works here cares about the business. More important, they care about each other." These managers speak with pride about their employees. They firmly believe that any employee problems that should arise can and will be addressed for the benefit of both employees and employer.

The differences between the two sets of comments have many implications for employee management. Most managers would quickly agree that they wish they could truthfully make comments like those in the second set. Many managers could but only through a huge transformation in how they go about leading people.

Transformational Leadership

Before turning to the specifics of transformational leadership, we need an overview of leadership. Leadership is influencing what others do. Leadership is influencing behavior. Like it or not, employers are leaders because they influence what their employees do, when they do it, how well they do it and with what attitude they do it.

By action or inaction, managers lead. Doing nothing does not mean that a manager has escaped from his or her leadership responsibilities. Inaction simply suggests to employees that they are free to make their own rules and depend on their own preferences rather than looking to their employer for direction. A newly hired tractor driver who starts working without the benefit of orientation, training and direction quickly concludes that how he or she

drove tractor at the last job must be the way it should be done here. If a co-worker intervenes to provide some instruction, the conclusion is clear, "Employees are the ones who know what is going on around here."

To influence employees in a proactive way, managers choose leader behaviors that are their ways of interacting with employees. These leader behaviors may be limited to what the leader has experienced with parents, former employers and supervisors for whom he or she has worked. Often, these leader behaviors are simply "what is natural" to the leader. Many leaders have never thought about how they lead, which of their leader behaviors work best or even that they might be able to change. They rarely look at themselves through the eyes of employees. When that new tractor driver who started work without training makes a mistake, it must be the employee's fault. "Why else would he not have used some common sense rather than nearly causing a serious accident?"

No matter how a manager leads, the intended outcome includes getting the desired results from the employees. The desired results stem from the goals of the business, i.e., what the manager is trying to accomplish through management, leadership and hard work. Employee goals and satisfaction from accomplishment of these goals through a job can be totally excluded from how a leader makes decisions about employees.

Transformational leadership is a particular way of practicing leadership. It is leadership with the following characteristics:

- Leaders provide vision for the business and the key role of employees in realizing the vision.
- Leaders seek ways to succeed through major changes that involve employees.
- Leaders gain respect, support and trust from employees.

- Empowered employees receive training and coaching that reinforce their desire to contribute to the "common good" of the business.
- Leaders promote teamwork while paying attention to the importance of personal attention for each employee.

Through transformational leadership, employees are motivated to de-emphasize their personal and career goals for the good of the business. Transformational leadership succeeds or fails on the extent to which employees are inspired by their leader and the leader's dramatic vision for the business. Employees understand and accept the vision for the business even though it requires them to make major changes. Returning to that new tractor driver, a transformational leader wants the new employee to become convinced that how he prefers to drive a tractor is much less important than how the business and employer need the tractor to be driven. Being inspired to accept a new way of driving a tractor is dramatically different from believing that, "there is nothing more I need to know about tractors because I am an experienced tractor driver."

Transformational leadership requires more than inspiration of employees by the manager. Inspired employees unable to experience productive change and success will soon lose their inspiration. They will substitute their self-interests for the interests of the business. Inspired employees need to be empowered through their leader's delegation of responsibility and authority, training and coaching.

Transformational leadership can be practiced at every level of the business. To illustrate, a farm's owner/manager can inspire, empower and coach the crops manager, livestock manager and office manager. He can work with them to develop a team approach to top management of the business. The key

managers in turn have the opportunity to copy what they have learned from the owner/manager. Each can create a vision for dramatic change in his or her part of the business that serves to inspire subordinates. These inspired subordinates can then be empowered, trained and coached. At the lowest levels of the farm business, even the newest employees can "catch" the enthusiasm for what is happening in the business and soon find themselves de-emphasizing their personal goals to help accomplish the vision that started at the top with the owner/manager.

Transformational leadership is based on an absolute conviction by managers that the business can be changed through changing employees. Anything less than an absolute conviction means the alternative to transformational leadership will prevail.

The Alternative to Transformational Leadership

The alternative to transformational leadership of farms and ranches is aptly described as "here-we-go-again" leadership. This type of leadership means that most of what has been will continue to be. "Here-we-go-again" leadership is likely to have the following characteristics:

- Some routine change is expected; dramatic change is unwelcome.
- Managers value their technical skills more than their leadership and people skills. They believe they could do most tasks faster, easier and with less hassle than depending on employees.
- Managers think of employees as having little responsibility for the success of the business.
- Managers expect to get performance from employees through monetary rewards and benefits.
- Managers expect their employees to be self-interested; in fact, they

usually find that they are self-interested.
- Managers provide jobs for employees with little concern about the job/employee fit; neither employer nor employee thinks much about careers in farm employment.

In sharp contrast to transformational leadership, "here-we-go-again" leadership is most concerned with getting the work done and fine-tuning what is. Progress is expected but only in quite gradual, understandable and low risk ways.

Becoming a Transformational Leader

After one has developed an understanding of what transformational leadership is and found it attractive, the question remains: how to do it? Not surprising, no single recipe or list of what to do or not do works in all situations. Nevertheless, the research on characteristics of successful transformational leaders generally shows the following to be important recommendations:

- Have a clear and bold **vision** for the business and the crucial role employees play in the vision. The vision needs to be bold yet realistic. An important part of transformational leadership is a passion for making major changes in the business through employees. The vision should be simple enough to be readily grasped by employees without being so simplistic as to have no intellectual challenge.

Transformational leaders have visions that include dramatic changes. These dramatic changes may be in size of business, technology, products or services, empowerment of employees, training of employees, how the business is financed and/or risk assumed. All

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the envisioned changes include a critical role for employees.

- Accept the role of **change agent**. It is the transformational leader that must lead the change. Being an idea person is not enough. No matter how good an idea, it needs a confident and committed advocate. Employees can quickly sense lack of commitment to the proposed changes. They want to believe in the transformational leader and to follow the leader with the confidence that there will be success through the changes that are being made.

- Hire employees with a history of **self-motivation and accomplishment**. People who have enjoyed accomplishments in the past are more likely to want to continue accomplishing. Understanding what a transformational leader is trying to accomplish comes easier for employees who have experienced change and resulting successes.

- Emphasize **communication** with every employee. A bold vision has value only to the extent that it is understood and embraced throughout the business. Changes being made are likely to face much skepticism if not ridicule from employees if not well understood.

- **Delegate** responsibility and authority. Empowered employees know they are important to the business. They appreciate both the challenge and the compliment of being empowered.

- Encourage **teamwork**. Both formal and informal teamwork can work. What is essential is the commitment of employees to the business and the leader's bold vision.

- Seize the opportunity to reinforce **early successes**. Make it clear to all employees that their progress is noticed and appreciated. Build on early successes to take larger and larger steps toward the vision. Celebrate successes in ways that employees enjoy.

- Stay in close contact with **individuals**. Appreciate the variation in their strengths, ideas and experiences. Recognize their individual contributions. Reward them with praise and public acclaim. Find people doing things right and regularly say thank you. Expression of appreciation need not wait until year-end reviews.

- Take advantage of **charisma** to inspire employees. A manager's charisma comes from a personality employees consider pleasing. Charismatic leaders have charm that appeals to employees causing them to want to please the leader. Employees are attracted to charismatic leaders.

  Not all managers have charisma. Nevertheless, many managers perceive themselves and their personalities as attractive. What they fail to understand is how different their employees see them than they see themselves.

  Can a manager determined to be a transformational manager learn to be more charismatic? Yes, but only through courageous discarding of deeply imbedded habits of dealing with other people. What comes easy for a charismatic leader often seems an impossible struggle for a noncharismatic leader. Managers unsuccessful in becoming charismatic have no choice but to depend on other means to inspire their employees.

- Help individuals accomplish their **personal goals**. Even though the transformational leader inspires employees to be more interested in the business than in themselves, personal goals are important. Herein lies an opportunity for the employer to take advantage of a second source of motivation for employees.

As we have seen, transformational leadership strives to use commitment to the business as a motivator. To the extent that the employee sees the job as complimentary to accomplishment of personal goals, there is a second source of motivation. Esteem, self-fulfillment, secured financial situation, training to qualify for career advancement, security, intellectual challenge and opportunity to be creative are examples of personal goals that can be reached in part through employment with a transformational leader.

Managers following one or two of these recommendations are unlikely to be successful in transforming their businesses and employees. In fact, transformation is the result of a unique and complex combination of these recommendations. No two transformational managers are alike because they vary much in their personal characteristics just as their businesses and employees vary. What works well for one transformational leader may be a dramatic failure for another.

Concluding Comment

Be careful in concluding that transformational leadership is exactly what you and your business need. For some managers, some businesses and in particular for some sets of goals for businesses, transformational leadership is not only unnecessary and inappropriate, it is unlikely to be successful.

Transformational leadership is for managers who find the current state of their business and employee management unacceptable. Furthermore, they know that fixing a problem here or there means only that the big problems will still be present next year and five years from now. These managers see the need for transformation of what is and they have a clear and compelling vision of what could be. Furthermore, they are absolutely convinced that working alone means the vision will never be accomplished. They know that transformation of employees is as necessary as transformation of the business and how the business is led.

Dollars to Donuts: How to Compete for Agricultural Labor

By Sarah L. Fogleman

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Introduction

In the popular movie "What Women Want," Mel Gibson's character is involved in a freak accident that leaves him with the ability to read women's minds. Many times, employers wish they had that ability. Farms, ranches, and agribusinesses have become more dependent upon non-family labor and this has left countless employers wondering exactly what employees want.

While the possibility of learning how to read minds is very remote, there are certain practices, tools, and pieces of advice that can help employers to better understand employees and the employee marketplace. Recent economic struggles aside, the market for qualified and capable labor is always tight and until that mind-reading technology is perfected, employers will be stuck competing the old-fashioned way.

Who's competing?

Frequently agricultural producers consider their neighbors and fellow farmers and ranchers to be their main competitors for agricultural labor. This isn't necessarily the case. Agricultural employees may have had previous agricultural experience or an interest in farm or ranch work, but that doesn't necessarily limit them to employment within that one industry. Qualified agricultural employees would typically be desirable in a number of industries that utilize the same sets of skills. To be competitive, an agricultural business must consider all the options that employees have available to them and then compete with those businesses, regardless of the industries they represent.

How employers compete: Compensation, Reputation, Situation

There are many factors that put employees and employers together, and other factors that keep them together. Each of those factors may be classified into one of the following groups: compensation, reputation, or situation.

Certainly compensation is the item that comes to mind first when most people think about recruiting and retaining employees. Certainly, if an employer's compensation package is severely below what competitors are paying, that employer is likely to have a difficult time recruiting and retaining employees.

But compensation is far from the only factor when it comes to competing for potential employees. A business's reputation is going to carry considerable weight in most agricultural communities. In almost every community, there are businesses that are considered the best places to work. Sometimes compensation plays a role in that but it is seldom the only factor. Ultimately, the best competitors are the best employers and that's a distinction that goes far beyond compensation.

The other factor that will bring employers and employees together, or pull them apart, is the situation. People do not exist solely within the confines of the business. They have families, personal interests and needs. Understanding these situations and how to use them to your advantage will give your business a huge competitive advantage.

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Elements of Successful Compensation Packages

According to Schuler, "Total compensation involves the assessment of employee contributions in order to distribute fairly and equitably both direct and indirect organizational rewards in exchange for these contributions." In other words, compensation has evolved beyond just an hourly wage. It's no longer a matter of answering the question, "how much do I have to pay?" Today, successful employers utilize both direct and indirect elements to meet the needs of their employees.

Direct compensation includes an employee's base salary which can be an annual salary or hourly wage and any performance-based pay that an employee receives, such as profit-sharing bonuses. *Indirect compensation* is far more varied, including everything from legally required public protection programs such as Social Security to health insurance, retirement programs, paid leave, and life cycle benefits, for example child care or moving expenses (Schuler). Both of these types of compensation are important in developing a competitive compensation package.

While many schools of thought exist on what constitutes a fair wage, there are no hard and fast rules. Research indicates that compensation is among the leading things potential employees consider when looking for employment. So the question employers should be asking is, what do employees expect wages to do? Research from the University of California says employees expect wages to 1) cover basic living expenses, 2) keep up with inflation, 3) provide some funds for savings or recreation, and 4) increase over time (Billikopf). While recent research has been devoted to the links between employee pay and satisfaction (Fogleman, et al), the general consensus of these types of studies is that pay should be tied to performance to be effective. However, with agricul-tural jobs, that cannot always be done easily. Incentives offer the most common type of performance-based pay but there are other alternatives for managers to consider. Time-based pay is another performance-based option but before this, or any other alternatives can be discussed, it is important to develop a clear understanding of wage structures (Billikopf).

The first thing employers should consider when developing compensation packages is fairness. It is crucial that businesses maintain internal and external equity. *Internal equity* refers to fairness between employees in the same business while *external equity* refers to relative wage fairness compared to wages with other farms or businesses. No matter the compensation level, if either internal or external equity is violated, a business will most likely experience employee dissatisfaction and employees will begin to balance their performance through a variety of ways ranging from decreased productivity to absenteeism and eventually to leaving the business (Billikopf).

It's not about money....It's about meeting the needs of your employees

Employers who wish to create and maintain competitive compensation packages need to concern themselves first with the needs of their employees. Most agricultural businesses are small, and most agricultural business managers consider that a limitation of creating competitive compensation packages. True, a business with three employees might have a more difficult time setting up a 401(k) or health insurance package, but small businesses have the opportunity to know their employees much better, therefore better understanding their needs.

The success of compensation packages is not measured by the dollar cost to the employer. The success of a com-

pensation package is measured in how difficult it would be to duplicate those same benefits from a competing employer. This refers not just to cash wages but also to direct and indirect benefits, including such items as flexibility in scheduling or working conditions.

So, step one for any employer who is trying to create a competitive compensation package is to develop an understanding of what his/her employees need. Step two is to gain an understanding of what competing employers are currently offering.

Compensation Package Values in Kansas

Perhaps the most common labor-related question asked of extension professionals is in regard to employee compensation. Unfortunately, "What should I pay my employee?" is not easily answered. There are dozens of factors to consider and they will vary with every situation. But the fact that the question is not easily answered does not mean that it does not address an important issue. To help producers make more informed decisions in regards to employee compensation, the Kansas Farm Management Association conducted a survey of its membership during the fall of 2001. In this survey, participating operations provided detailed information about employee characteristics and compensation, including cash wages and complete benefit information.

Employee Competency

A single business may employ people who possess a wide range of experience, skill, and decision-making authority. Trying to compensate employees within such a wide spectrum of competency can cause managers to struggle with issues of internal and external equity. Internal equity refers to the challenge of making sure that individuals within a single business are compensated at rates that are appropriate based on their relative competencies. External equity applies to the comparison of compensation packages of businesses competing within the same industry. Across an industry, employees with comparable competencies would be expected to receive comparable wages and benefits; otherwise there would be considerable labor migration as employees seek out the highest paying employers. But, before this is possible, levels of competency must be identified and associated wages quantified. Consider this the "apples to apples" approach to comparing and analyzing employee compensation.

To help respondents and researchers better understand the variation seen in agricultural workforces, farm owners and managers were asked to provide information on employee competency when filling out the survey. As a result, survey respondents were asked to classify each employee reported on this study into one of the following five competency levels:

Level 1: Employees who are either new to the farm or have no advanced skills. They are, for example, individuals who are assigned their tasks by another person and who then perform miscellaneous jobs that require no previous training or experience.

Level 2: Specialized individuals who perform anywhere from one to many tasks that require training. Although these employees may make decisions such as the order in which to perform certain tasks, they do not have the authority to make decisions relating to their job responsibilities, area of production, or coworkers. As a result, a Level 2 employee has no supervisory authority.

Level 3: Employees who are highly skilled in at least one specified area. These employees may make decisions related to their areas of expertise and may administer those

decisions through other employees, therefore giving a Level 3 employee some supervisory capacity. However, this person's decision-making authority does not extend into other areas of the operation.

Level 4: Because of his or her exceptional skill level, this person is in a position to make decisions that impact entire areas of the operation. Many employees may have to carry out those decisions, giving this person a potentially large supervisory authority.

Level 5: Level 5 employees are the most skilled and qualified full-time employees with a farm. They have complete supervisory authority and the most decision-making authority given to any full-time employee.

Another important distinction was made in regard to the various workloads that individual employees may carry. Some farm workers are certainly full-time but the seasonality of agriculture lends itself to a reliance on part-time and seasonal workers that are available during busy times. For reporting purposes, the number of hours an employee works and the number of months he or she is employees dictated that every employee included in the survey was classified into one of the following categories.

Full-Time: Any employee working more than 1,800 hours in one year for a given business

Part-Time: Any employee employed twelve months per year who works fewer than 35 hours per week

Seasonal: Any person employed fewer than twelve months per year for a given business

Survey Participant Information

Overall, information was submitted for 446 employees, with the majority of those individuals classified in Levels 2 and 3. While, overall 13% of participating employees owned all or part of the business, that number rose to 63% of employees in Level 5. The same is true when considering the percentage of employees related to the owners, with 34% of the overall group holding that distinction as compared to 79% of Level 5 employees.

The sample was predominantly male, 87%, with 12 years of formal education and 15 years of experience in the agricultural industry. Overall, employees have been with their current businesses an average of 8.6 years but that number is dramatically different for employees in Level 5 where the average employee has spent over 21 years with his/her current employer.

Fifteen percent of employees received sick leave, from 3% of Level 1 employees to 28% of employees in Level 5. The same trend holds for vacation time but it is a more common benefit, with 39 percent of respondents receiving that particular benefit.

Employee Compensation Results

Tables 1-2 outline the compensation packages found during the 2001 Kansas Farm Management Association survey. Compensation packages can be broken down into their individual elements (annual cash wages, hourly cash wages, benefit values and prevalence) or considered as a whole (total compensation and hourly total compensation.) As you look through the following tables you will likely notice some interesting trends.

Compensation across levels–As seen in the following tables, compensation and wage rates tended to trend upward across the competency levels. Unsurprisingly, as competency increased, so did compensation. But that typically did not hold true in regard to employees in Level 5, where compensation typically dropped off below that of

Table 1. *Full-Time Employees (> 1,800 hours per year)*

	All	Employee Competency Level				
		1	2	3	4	5
Count[1]	245	22	60	64	42	54
Employees paid an annual salary, #	130	4[3]	22	35	28	40
Employees paid an hourly wage, #	114	18	38	29	13	14
Compensation and Wages						
Total compensation, $	28,188	20,871	25,008	29,016	33,060	30,139
Hourly compensation, $	10.13	8.07	9.10	10.77	11.73	10.21
Total cash wage (hourly & salaried)	22,651	18,415	20,462	23,527	27,155	22,351
Annual cash wage (salaried)	23,126		18,963	23,176	27,229	22,710
Hourly wage ($paid/hour)	8.36	7.01	7.94	8.88	10.63	7.94
Hourly wage equivalent (salaried)	8.08		6.78	8.65	9.27	7.52
Benefits[2]						
Health insurance, $	3,676		3,118	3,382	3,987	4,281
Receive health insurance, %	38	18	25	41	45	54
Housing, $	4,036	4,300	3,914	3,552	5,520	4,060
Receive housing, %	35	27	45	42	24	26
Utilities, $	1,828		1,724	2,047	1,925	1,770
Receive utilities, %	37	18	38	38	38	43
Farm products, $	934	392	472	832	1,569	1,266
Receive farm products, %	56	55	60	48	67	52
Personal use of vehicles, $	1,160		1,132	1,113	1,171	1,275
Receive use of vehicles, %	21	14	25	23	17	22
Use of equipment, $	2,011		357	1,692	3,400	3,714
Receive use of equipment, %	16	0	20	19	14	17
Retirement program contribution, $	1,538		675	972	1,900	2,935
Receive retirement contribution, %	11	1	8	14	12	11
Profit sharing, $	3,767					
Receive profit sharing, %	4	0	5	3	0	7
Bonuses, $	730	360	968	681	1,014	481
Receive bonuses, %	38	55	45	45	26	24
Average hours worked per week	53	49	52	52	54	57

[1] Competency information was not provided for three of the full-time employees included in the study.
[2] Benefit values are included in the average only when an employee receives that benefit.
[3] Due to confidentiality concerns, results are not reported when responses<5.

employees in Level 4. This is something which researchers were not expecting and, as a result, have formed a couple of theories.

Employees in Level 5 were more likely to be business owners and/or related to the owners. The results seen here could be explained by the tendency for owners or family members to take less in compensation and more in business equity.

The average Level 5 employee has been with his/her current employer over 21 years, as compared to just under 9 years for average employee in Level 4. This information means that Level 5 employees are under less market pressure than their counterparts in Level 4.

In other words, Level 5 employees are probably very situated in their jobs and do not frequently negotiate raises.

Hourly wage vs. hourly wage equivalent–The average hourly wage represents the average amount paid to employees who are paid on a per hour basis. However, the hourly wage equivalent is a figure that is calculated to represent the amount that a salaried employee is paid for an hour of his/her time. The trends present throughout the compensation results show that, for the lower competency levels, employees paid an annual salary receive more per hour of work than their coworkers who are

Table 2. Part-Time Employees (12 months/year, <35 hours/week)

	All	Employee Competency Level				
		1	2	3	4	5
Count[1]	64	13	28	12	5	5
Employees paid an annual salary, #	20	0[3]	7	6	3	4
Employees paid an hourly wage, #	43	13	20	6	2	1
Compensation and Wages						
Total compensation, $	8,953	4,600	8,242	11,234	18,484	7,655
Hourly compensation, $	9.82	6.09	8.43	13.00	18.36	11.04
Total cash wage (hourly & salaried)	6,938	4,499	7,584	7,861	8,572	4,004
Annual cash wage (salaried)	1,790		1,389	2,665		
Hourly wage ($ paid/hour)	7.26	5.95	7.48	7.67		
Hourly wage equivalent (salaried)	6.66		7.06	7.00		
Benefits[2]						
Health insurance, $	3,829		2,208	5,806		
Receive health insurance, %	23	0	18	42	40	60
Farm products, $	1,681					
Receive farm products, %	27	31	11	25	80	40
Personal use of vehicles, $	900					
Receive use of vehicles, %	8	0	4	0	0	80
Bonuses, $	94	36	139			
Receive bonuses, %	27	38	25	8	20	40
Average hours worked/week	18	15	20	20	17	15

[1]Competency information was not provided for one part-time employee included in this study.
[2] Benefit values are included in the average only when an employee receives that benefit.
[3] Due to confidentiality concerns, results are not reported when responses<5.

paid an hourly wage. But as competency increases, typically so does the number of hours worked per week, resulting in the higher level salaried employees actually receiving less per hour worked than the employee paid an hourly wage.

Prevalence of benefits–Cash compensation, rather through hourly wages or annual salaries, are certainly the backbone of most compensation packages. But as seen in the following tables, benefits are very prevalent, particularly with full-time employees who receive, on average $5,537 in non-cash compensation per year. The most common benefit was farm products, followed by health insurance and bonuses. While housing was not the most common benefit, it was, on average the most costly, valued typically at just over $4,000 per year. Profit sharing was the least common benefit, received by 2% of all employees and 4% of full-time employees.

Reputation

In every community there are employers with excellent reputations who seem to have a never-ending supply of qualified applicants. These are commonly referred to as "The Employers of Choice." What determines an "Employer of Choice"? What magical formula do these businesses abide by that makes them such worthy places of employment? What does a business have to pay to become one of these chosen few?

That isn't the question. "Employers of Choice" are not employers who got ahead simply by paying more. They are employers who got ahead by being better employers, a distinction that goes far beyond compensation. In short, they are employers who have managed to treat employees as they, themselves, would like to be treated. While there is no medicine or vaccine that can enable an employer to master this skill, there are six basic steps that potential "Em-

ployers of Choice" would do well to follow.

1. **Communicate**–99.9% of all labor problems stem from a lack of communication. If every person within your business can honestly make the following four statements, then the majority of your labor headaches will go away.

I know what to expect.
I know what's going on.
I know how I am doing.
I know how we are doing.

2. **Use job descriptions**–These are the most basic tools available for human resource managers and they are the tools that managers are least likely to use. A job description is a simple document that helps an employee to know what is expected of him/her. They don't have to be any more complex than that.

3. **Recruit and hire the right people for the positions**–labor-related problems have been created by hiring the first "warm body" that comes through the door. This is an important cycle to stop. If you have a feeling that an applicant will not work out but you're desperate for help and want to extend an offer anyway, don't. Be patient if at all possible. It's better to be short-handed than to have an unqualified, untrainable person on the payroll.

4. **Provide proper training**–don't let turnover or a hectic schedule stop you from training new employees and providing learning experiences for existing employees. The time you take to train an employee will come back to reward you ten times over if it's done well.

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5. **Lay out the ground rules**–in other words, employees should know, without a doubt, what they can expect from you and what you will be expecting of them.

6. **Meet your employee's needs**–again, this isn't always solved with money. Take some time to get to know your employees and then do your best to provide them with the resources they need to be happy in their jobs.

Certainly in most agricultural communities, word of mouth works. Your business is going to have a reputation, whether you like it or not. That is why following the above steps is crucial. Become a good employer, and becoming the "Employer of Choice" is not far behind.

The other aspect of developing a reputation involves managers taking an active role in promoting their business as a place of employment. This may be as simple as participating in local career days or as complex as an extended public relations campaign. Whatever method used, however, the objective should be the same: to improve the reputation of the business and the industry.

Situation

Situations that bring employers and employees together, or pull them apart, are sometimes largely out of the control of the participating parties.

An employee has a wonderful job that makes him very happy and then a change in his personal life forces him to move, thus leaving that great job behind.

A business has a group of very capable employees until the business decides, or is forced, to change, modifying the skills and competencies that are expected of its people and, suddenly, those employees can't perform their jobs.

Those are just a couple of examples of the situations that change a business or a person and, therefore, change the employee/employer relationship. It is very difficult to compete against factors that are out of your control. The best any business or employee can hope for in this situation is to examine the situation and create new alternatives. Perhaps that new parent who would like to stay at home would actually be interested in doing some part-time work. Perhaps an existing employee would be willing and able to learn a new technology. But no matter how flexible employers and employees try to be, there are certain limitations. After all, it's very hard to telecommute to a farm.

Just as situations can come between employers and employees, they can also bring people and jobs together. When competing for agricultural labor, it's important to make sure that your business is put forward in the best possible situation.

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Good Human Resource Management in Bad Times

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Introduction

Bad times happen. The bad times often come from changes and calamities over which the business had no control. Better times follow bad times for most businesses as surely as bad times follow good times. This paper focuses on the human resource challenges associated with working through the bad times. The human resource goal is clear – come out the other end with a group of employees at least as committed to the business as when the bad times started.

A theme that will run through this entire paper is that the top managers of the business set the tone and model the optimism necessary to weather the storm. Good human resource management in bad times clearly starts at the top. It is simply naive for the top managers to believe that they have the option to be pessimistic, unresponsive to the bad times and impatient with employees' doubts without affecting their employees.

The Challenges

The top managers of a farm or ranch facing bad times have four key challenges:

- Their attitudes toward the bad times, employees and the future
- Developing a plan for working through the bad times
- Adjusting human resource practices
- Communication with all employees

The managers' positive attitudes point the way to the future when times will be better. Brooding, pessimism, glumness and withdrawal from employees send a clear negative message to employees. It is the managers way of saying we see the future, we don't like it and we have decided there is nothing we can do to make things better. In contrast, managers' enthusiastic confidence that together we can work through this and come out better for it, sends a completely different message. A dairy farmer commented in the middle of a severe draught and a period of low milk prices, "I don't yet know how we are going to get through this but we will. And we will be better for it." That suggests a positive attitude that everyone else in the business can rally around. It also models the attitude that others are expected to have about what is possible.

Planning is the foundation for working through bad times. It is helpful to have widespread discussion in the business about possible alternatives for improving cash flow, reducing costs, finding new opportunities, gaining understanding and support from lenders, improving morale, how to celebrate even little successes, nonmonetary ways to reward employees, maintaining confidence of landlords and postponing major purchases. These are examples of positive discussions that have value regardless of the decisions and plans that result. It is top management's way of saying we aren't giving up; instead we are adjusting our plans to a situation we didn't expect.

Human resource practices may also need adjusting. The challenge is to make the adjustments without losing the confidence and commitment of employees. A later section of this paper includes a discussion of specific adjustments for managers to consider.

Communication with employees will be a challenge throughout the bad times. This paper will conclude with some guidelines for effective communication within the business.

The Fears

Fear can paralyze. A great leader once said that the greatest thing we have to fear is fear itself. The same can be said for the top managers. Managers understandably fear that they will not be able to find a way through the bad times. They are likely to have doubts about what was or was not done in the past to prevent the current crisis.

Top managers fear that they will lose their employees if they know the truth about the current status of the business and/or industry. They can easily see how much easier it is to keep the employees in the dark rather than risking "telling all." Even if employees stay through the bad times, top managers fear they will have serious problems dealing with the inevitable morale problems.

After top managers accept the responsibility of communication with everyone in the business, there are resulting fears to be confronted. For example, it would not be surprising for top managers to fear that the communication will be misunderstood, be only one-way without meaningful interaction with employees or become the source of numerous unanswerable questions.

Employees too have fears. They will easily sense that times are not what they were. They too read newspapers, listen to news, observe the weather, know something about markets and talk with each other. They pay attention to managers' nonverbal communication that says times are bad, perhaps really bad.

Employees feed on each other's fears. The very nature of the rumor mill suggests that the worse the news, the more likely it is to be believed by those lacking credible information.

Human Resource Practices for Bad Times

The "right" human resource practices for bad times depend on the specifics faced by managers and employees. The practices cannot be easily selected from some prescribed magical recipe. A practice that is highly appropriate for one farm may be ineffective for a neighboring farm. The following list is a cafeteria of practices for managers to consider and adopt, modify or reject. The relative importance of the suggestions is unrelated to their ordering in the list.

- **Be honest** about the bad times in hiring new employees. New employees already have sufficient challenge in dealing with the realities of a new job compared to their expectations. There is no need to add misinformation about the challenges being faced by the business. New employees will appreciate an interviewer's accurate description of the situation and what is being done to work through the bad times. Nothing is gained by leaving the "reality check" to bits and pieces of information and misinformation from co-workers.
- **Be fair** about work loads. A common practice in bad times is to expect other employees to pick up the work that had been done by an employee who has quit, been dismissed or retired. Extra work with no explanation or adjustments in compensation leaves an impression of unfairness. It is easy for employees in this situation to jump to the conclusion that the employer is better off as a result of there being one less person in the work force. The employee perspective is that the work is still getting done and the employer has one less person on the payroll.

Fairness may require spreading the work of the departed worker over as many people as possible rather than just two or three people. Fairness may also require postponing some low priority work so that the work of the departed employee can be covered. Temporary adjustments in compensation may also be justified including overtime pay and bonuses. Sometimes employers go so far as temporarily dividing the pay that the departed worker would have earned among the people now doing his or her work.

Fairness to family members is also important. When faced with a shortage of labor and resources to hire another employee, managers sometimes assume that family members have unlimited dedication to the business and the capacity for more and more work with less and less sleep. Such an erroneous assumption can have devastating effects on longer-run relationships among family members. Marriages and quality of family life are also at stake.

- Continue to **reward high quality employee performance**. The rewards can be in forms other than pay raises. In fact, during bad times there may be no raises or even pay decreases for both management and nonmanagement personnel. Knowing what each employee will appreciate and consider as a reward is critical. One employee may appreciate greater flexibility in scheduling work hours while another will appreciate his supervisor giving up her two tickets to the Kansas State-Nebraska football game. Verbal and written recognition of the sacrifices that employees are making during the bad times can be among the most important nonmonetary rewards.
- **Honor previous commitments**. Canceling the commitment to an employee for two weeks of unpaid vacation time so that she can visit her brother in Washington D.C. can have a significant negative impact on her morale and her co-workers. Unless the employee volunteers to give up her promised unpaid vacation time, finding a way to cover for her should be a high priority.
- **Catch people doing things right and say thank you.** Stay on the lookout for extraordinary performance. Maybe the business can start an "extra mile" award for those people who truly go the extra mile for the good of the business.
- **Avoid nitpicking** the performance of stressed and tired employees. Nitpicking can make a supervisor appear insensitive to an employee's effort. It will matter little, even it they happen to notice, that their supervisor is making even more sacrifices and is more stressed than they. Bad times call for patience and sensitivity to what employees are going through.
- **Listen** to employees talk about what they think the problems are and what can be done about these problems. Listen with an open mind. Listen without immediately judging the worth of their ideas. Ask both how and why not when evaluating the employees' ideas.
- **Provide new goals and new challenges** for employees that will help the business get through the bad times. No matter how discouraged and skeptical employees may be, they want something to believe in. Ask supervisors to translate management's plans for getting through the bad times into individualized goals for employees. The businesses' full commitment to working through the bad times is possible only if there is commitment to attaining goals at every level of the business. This helps reinforce the managers' positive attitudes. It also says that the business is doing

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something about the bad times rather than simply waiting and hoping for better times. Finding out how to earn a profit at lower prices, how to get the work done with one less employee and how to cob together workable repairs for the old piece of equipment rather than replace it are examples of problems where employees may have better ideas than any manager.

- **Avoid reinforcing** how bad the times are day after day. Avoid having one more staff meeting void of any good news. Disagree with employees who say there is no hope. Help employees understand that better times follow bad times. Help employees understand that other businesses are worse off.
- **Spare employees** the managers' woes. Employees are no better off after hearing the managers' complaints about having to deal with management problems. Employees remember that when times were good, the managers may have been quite content to take credit for the successes without sharing the glory with the employees.
- **Avoid the myth** that treating employees as friends and family will cause them to sympathize and be willing to sacrifice more. In fact, taking advantage of "friends" during bad times can damage relationships rather than making employees happy sufferers.
- **Continue** giving priority to your management responsibilities. Filling the shoes of departed workers suggests to the remaining employees that you are avoiding important management responsibilities. They expect managers to be looking out for the longer-run interests of the business.

Communication

Even in good times, organizational communication challenges managers and when done poorly, undermines efforts to build good relationships with employees. In bad times, having good organizational communication becomes even more important.

During bad times, managers have several key messages to communicate to employees. In particular, managers need to communicate their attitudes about the bad times, employees and the future. They need to also communicate their plans for working through the bad times and the adjustments in human resource practices that will be necessary. This communication will be top down in the organization. It can incorporate a variety of communication channels including staff meetings with top managers, crew or small group meetings and written reports and updates. Managers can also communicate nonverbally through such things as their avoidance of employees, moods and upbeat demeanor. Top down communication will be both formal and informal. Managers have the primary responsibility for top down communication.

Organizational communication in bad times can also be bottom up. Employees taking initiative to complain to their supervisors, to ask questions and to offer solutions to problems are examples of bottom up communication. Bottom up communication is mostly informal, i.e., nothing in writing. Employees have the primary responsibility for bottom up communication.

Lateral communication is a third type of organizational communication. In bad times, employees will spend more time talking with each other than when times were good. This reflects their fears, their need to know, their attempts to figure out on their own what managers are not telling them and their wanting to test their own conclusions against those of co-workers. Lateral

communication is almost exclusively informal. Employees have sole responsibility for their lateral communication.

Organizational communication is potentially hampered by several barriers. Managers have the primary responsibility for dealing with these barriers. The barriers can never be completely removed but their negative effects can be minimized. The following barriers are most likely to hamper organizational communication during bad times:

- **Nonverbal communication**. This barrier is caused by employees misunderstanding the meaning of managers' actions, gestures, moods, absences and appearances of being stressed out. Managers need to be as careful as possible to assure that their verbal messages are consistent with their nonverbal messages.

- **Perception**. In bad times, employees are likely to treat their perceptions as if they were facts. Managers need to be on the look out for misperceptions. Asking employees for feedback and summaries of their understanding of what has been communicated top down is helpful.

- **The grapevine**. News travels more rapidly by the grapevine than by formal communication channels. This means that employees are passing information to each other. Managers have no control over the distortions, speculations and rumors that will inevitably spring up from the grapevine. Managers need to work continuously to refute rumors and misinformation.

- **Information overload**. Some managers do not provide enough information. Out of concern for uninformed employees, managers can provide too much information. Too many meetings, too many newsletters, too many long e-mails and too much time in small group discussions are examples of how employees sometimes get more information than they can absorb. Managers need to pay careful attention to what employees already know and how much more they are capable of absorbing.

- **Lack of candidness**. Both managers and employees can fall into the trap of telling others what they think they want to hear rather than what is candid and truthful. Bad news clearly understood is more helpful to employees than hinting at bad news. Similarly, managers need to continuously encourage employees to say what they are really thinking rather than what employees think the managers want to hear. An employee telling a manager he has a good idea when in fact the employee thinks it is a stupid idea that has no chance of working damages both the manager's understanding of the situation and the employee's credibility.

Concluding Comment

Bad times are not fun for anyone in the business. They cannot, however, be avoided. Top managers have the primary responsibility for leading the business through the bad times. Human resource practices adjusted to fit the bad times are important to making it to better times. Bad times need not weaken the employer/employee relationships that have been built in good times. Ironically, employee problems handled well during bad times can strengthen the work force and employee commitment to the business.

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Designing Jobs that Motivate and Challenge Employees

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Introduction

Managers have the opportunity to influence the motivation of employees through design of their jobs. Well-designed jobs help accomplish two important goals: getting the necessary work done in a timely and competent manner, and motivating and challenging employees. Both the business and the employee benefit from successful job design. Poorly designed jobs leave to chance whether the expected tasks will get done in a timely and competent manner. Poorly designed jobs, moreover, are likely to be discouraging, boring and frustrating to employees. Even if employees would otherwise be enthused, competent and productive, poorly designed jobs almost certainly lead to employee disappointment.

Managers have the responsibility of designing jobs. If they ignore this responsibility, employees will design their own jobs. Not surprisingly, the jobs designed by employees are more likely to be attuned to employee experiences and preferences than to the goals of the business. Neither the business nor the employees are long-term winners from managers defaulting job design to employees.

Job design starts with determining the duties, tasks and activities for each job. The process of determining the content of jobs is called job analysis. Job analysis is sometimes considered the foundation of human resource management. The content of jobs, job descriptions, hiring, orientation and training are all built on what is learned from job analysis.

In this paper, we will consider four keys to the design of jobs that motivate and challenge employees: job analysis, job design, characteristics of desirable jobs and fine tuning of jobs through job enrichment and adjusted work schedules to further increase their capacity to motivate and challenge employees

Job Analysis

Job analysis is a process of obtaining the information necessary for job design. Job analysis requires efficient collection of data about existing jobs and needs that new jobs are to address.

A manager has several important sources of data about job needs. In most businesses, the people now doing a job understand it best. Their experiences and insights are critical to understanding what the job is, the extent to which it is meeting the needs of the business and opportunities for an improved design. A cautionary note to keep in mind is that employees may fail to understand that job analysis is a process of gathering data about the job not an evaluation of the person doing the job. Managers need to explain carefully to employees that the goal is to improve their jobs not find a substitute for annual performance reviews.

Supervisors can add additional understanding of a job. In many farm and ranch businesses, managers and supervisors have often done many of the jobs in the business. Therefore, their experiences in the job are a valuable source of information.

Job analysis should generate data about **tasks, duties and responsibilities** of the person in the job. For a

milker, the tasks, duties and responsibilities might include: with one other person, prepare and milk 300 cows; examine cows for health problems; clean milking equipment and milking parlor after milking; and perform preventive maintenance on the milking equipment. The **equipment that will be operated and tools used** are also included in job analysis. For an officer manager, the list of equipment and tools might include a computer, copy machine, fax machine, paper shredder and telephone. The job analysis also shows the **knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and licenses** necessary for the job and the **performance standards** for the person doing the job. For a truck driver, this list might include at least two years of experience in over-the-road driving, valid commercial license and no moving violations during the last two years. The performance standards might be safe operation of the truck, no moving violations and timely delivery and pick ups as assigned. Determination of **physical demands** is also important for some jobs, e.g., be able to lift a 50-pound box to a height of 48 inches and carry the box 20 yards.

It is difficult to illustrate the importance of job analysis with a few simplistic examples. Perhaps a set of questions can give an added sense of the importance of job analysis. Note that all of the questions are trying to clarify what is or is not a part of the job being analyzed.

- Does the office manager need to know how to design a computerized payroll system or will the person in the position simply be doing payroll with a system already in place?
- Is the truck driver responsible for routine maintenance of the truck?
- Is the head milker responsible for annual performance evaluations of milkers or are these to be done by the herdsperson?

- Does the crop manager help plan the year's cropping plan or just carry out the plan developed by the farm manager?
- Is the cow manager responsible for decisions about which cows to cull or is this the responsibility of the herdsperson?
- Who is authorized to buy parts for machinery repair?
- Who is authorized to answer questions raised by a newspaper reporter who makes an unannounced visit to the ranch or farm?

One can easily see from this short list of questions that the importance of job analysis grows as a business grows, becomes more complex, and involves more employees. At some point in size and complexity of a business, managers must either take a more systematic approach to job design or deal with the many problems of inconsistency across employees, supervisors and crews.

Job analysis also paves the way for determination of policies, procedures and rules to guide employee decisions. Job analysis and the resulting job design do not provide all the guidelines for employee behavior. Policies, procedures and rules complement job design.

Job Design

After the job analysis has provided the necessary job data, managers are ready to design jobs. The job analysis provides an important reminder to keep employees in mind as jobs are designed.

Job design is the structuring of jobs to improve the efficiency of the business and improve employee satisfaction. Uninteresting or boring jobs will cause problems. Employers can capitalize on employees' interests and the advantages they see in farm work. To illustrate, people who love animals are motivated by the opportunity to work with animals. Jobs emphasizing animals attract such people. Some people like machin-

ery much more than animals. Others enjoy repairing machinery more than operating it. Some people like office work; others want to be outdoors. Job design provides guidelines to help get appropriate fit between employees and their jobs.

The results of the job analysis make it possible to design jobs while taking into consideration the tasks that must be accomplished for the business to succeed. Managers can add consideration of what individuals want in their jobs. Sometimes minor changes in job design can dramatically improve a job in the employee's view, e.g., changing a calf feeder's job to include, or no longer include, explanation of calf care to farm visitors. Another example is asking the employee to work closely with the veterinarian to improve calf health instead of simply reporting problems to a supervisor who in turn talks with the veterinarian.

Job design cannot overcome the fact that no job is perfect. Farm jobs have some disadvantages managers need to address when designing jobs. Each of the following job qualities responds to often stated disadvantages of farm work: reasonable number of work hours per day and per week, proper equipment in good repair, well lighted and ventilated work areas, training, some flexibility in scheduling work hours and regular communication with the supervisor. Paying little attention to these common concerns about farm jobs makes it almost certain that employees will not be satisfied with the jobs.

Job Characteristics

Anticipating what job characteristics will help motivate employees is important in job design. Managers can do their best to give each job the following five key characteristics.

First, design jobs whenever possible to encourage employees to use a **variety of skills**. Remind yourself of the rea-

sons that assembly line jobs are boring. Standing in one place using only one or two skills doing the same thing repeatedly is not satisfying for most people. One reason that many workers like varied work is that they get to use a variety of skills.

Second, design jobs whenever possible so that an employee does a **total job**, e.g., all aspects of calf raising as contrasted with just feeding or a milker position that includes more responsibilities than just milking. Even such a simple task as repairing gates may be more satisfying if one person has the responsibility to do everything including determining what parts are needed, buying parts, taking the gate apart, replacing parts, reassembling and testing to be sure everything is in order.

Third, design jobs so that the employee understands the **significance** of his or her job to the farm. Why is power washing important? Why is calf raising important? What contribution is the person making by doing a good job with dry cows? What problems are caused later on if pigs are not given proper care? The employee should have answers to these kinds of basic questions.

Fourth, design jobs so that each employee has **responsibility, challenge, freedom and the opportunity** to be creative. This requires the supervisor or owner/operator of the farm to delegate some authority. Delegation can be a powerful tool for improving a job. "You can do the job however you want as long as you get results." Such powerful words, such effective delegation and such important responsibility are likely to have positive impacts on employees.

Finally, make **feedback** a part of job design. Well-designed jobs anticipate the need for communication. Most employees want to know what is expected of them in the job, how they are doing, how they can improve, what latitude they have in changing how they do their tasks, what should be

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discussed with a supervisor and when the discussion should occur. Employees rarely complain about too much communication with their supervisor. They often want more communication.

Ergonomics

The tradition in farm and ranch work is to expect the person to adjust to the tool. A "one size fits all" mentality is common. The size may refer to an operator's seat, chairs for a staff meeting, volume of music in the milking parlor or length of handle on a tool. The message is, "You need to adjust."

Ergonomics turns the "one size fits all" mentality on its head. Ergonomics asks how the machine can be made to fit the person rather than how the person can fit the machine. Examples include adjustable operator seats, flexible lighting, variable temperature controls, padded floors, safety equipment, work areas adjustable to appropriate heights and angles and comfortable yet durable work clothes.

An increasingly diverse work force has made ergonomics more important. Men and women may use the same equipment. A 65-year-old man 5 feet 6 inches tall may take a turn operating a machine usually operated by a 20-year-old man 6 feet 6 inches tall. Clearly, it makes no sense to expect all employees to adjust to an unadjustable machine. Job design can contribute to employee motivation by taking advantage of the many advances that have been made through ergonomics.

Job Enrichment

Sometimes employees want more from their jobs than is now possible. Job enrichment is a response to employees ready for more responsibility, variety and challenge. Wanting more is only part of what is required to make job enrichment a success. Employees must be able to handle the enriched jobs that are being developed for them. Managers need to consider carefully each employee's physical capabilities, mental skills, organizational competence and capacity for learning before inviting an employee to take on an enriched job. Forcing more on employees than they are capable of handling will likely hurt the business and frustrate the employees.

The usual dimensions of job enrichment in the farm and ranch setting include the following:

- Make a job more challenging by making it more difficult. The job may be made more difficult, for example, by including more problem-solving, increasing the number of people with whom cooperation is necessary, increasing the complexity of tasks included in the job and providing less specific directions and rules.
- Assign challenging new tasks that the employee must learn to do through self-study, off-site training, on-the-job training, experimentation and/or contact with others who have the necessary expertise.
- Delegate responsibility and authority to an employee. Some examples include delegated responsibility and authority to: improve a part of the business such as pig mortality, resolve a specific problem such as employee turnover or gather the necessary information for determining the best alternative for replacing a major piece of machinery.
- Ask the employee to become the farm's expert in an area of interest to him or her, e.g., corn varieties.
- Provide the employee with performance reports about enterprises or major cost categories and ask that he or she provide analysis and suggestion on how to improve performance.

Job enrichment is a tool for improving employee motivation through satisfying a need for more challenge. Job

enrichment pays more attention to employee needs than to needs of the business. In particular, job enrichment responds to employee need for achievement, self-esteem and self-fulfillment. Job enrichment is likely to be counter-productive when employees do not have these higher level needs. Such employees are likely to see job enrichment as little more than employers trying to take advantage of them and frustrating them unnecessarily.

Job enrichment has compensation implications. One would expect that an employee who takes on an enriched job with no loss in work quality would realize some financial benefit. However, the impetus for job enrichment is increased motivation through more challenging work rather than higher pay through more responsibility. Job enrichment recognizes that non-monetary rewards are important to job satisfaction. Furthermore, to have a sense of progress in their careers, many employees need more than gradually increasing compensation. Job enrichment meets the need for non-monetary progress by providing a steady increase in challenges and professional development.

Work Schedules

The eight-hour work day/40 hours per week is the standard for most of the country's labor force. For several reasons, this has never been the standard for farm and ranch work. The Fair Labor Standards Act exempts farm and ranch work from overtime pay requirements when the workweek exceeds 40 hours. Thus, a farm or ranch employer can have a standard workweek of six, ten-hour days and have the same hourly pay rate for all 60 hours. The work ethic common to farming and ranching also contributes to acceptance of long workweeks. The seasonal nature of agriculture requires an all out effort during some weeks of the year. Consequently, work schedules have been dictated more by how to get

the work done than by seeking ways to increase employee motivation.

Some employers outside agriculture have made adjustments to traditional work schedules. Most common are flexible beginning and ending times, a compressed workweek and job sharing. These adjustments remain uncommon in agriculture. Nevertheless, farm and ranch managers sometimes have the option of changing traditional work schedules.

Flexible beginning and ending times, usually called flextime, eliminate common beginning and ending times for employees doing the same job. Instead, employers permit employees to choose daily starting and quitting times. To illustrate, a manager with five employees might have two beginning work at 7:00 a.m., one beginning at 8:30 and two beginning at 9:30. The manager might also offer flexibility in both time and length of the mid-day break. Quitting times would also vary greatly.

Flextime obviously cannot work in many situations. A crew working on a multi-person task would need to have common starting and quitting times. For example, harvesting might require a two-person crew. Milking might require a three-person crew. On the other hand, employees may have individual responsibilities that do not overlap with the work of other employees thus making flextime a possibility. A farm office with a single employee might not open until 8:00 a.m. even though all other employees start at 6:00 a.m.

Employees are generally enthusiastic about flextime because of the control it gives them over their work and nonwork schedules. Employers like the positive impacts of flextime on productivity, tardiness and absenteeism but not the increased difficulty of monitoring workers.

The compressed workweek has a reduced number of days worked each week with a corresponding increase in

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number of hours worked each day. A compressed workweek might be four days, each 12 hours long, rather than six days, each 8 hours long. The compressed workweek is incompatible with many jobs and the stamina of some employees. Nevertheless, it does provide an alternative to the traditional five or six day workweek. Employees with compressed workweeks report liking three days off each week.

Job sharing involves two or more people sharing a single job. The most common form of job sharing is a full-time position being converted to two part-time positions. The two part-timers split the full-time compensation. Each person typically works three days out of five, two days alone and one with the other person.

There are some potentially attractive applications of job sharing to farm employment. For example, a dairy farm that has a morning milking and an evening milking could use job sharing. Three part-time people might be hired for the morning milking instead of one full-time person. The three part-time people would be hired and trained together. Then they would be responsible for their own scheduling to be sure that one of the three was available for each morning milking, seven days per week, year around. The three could even be given the responsibility for recruiting and training a fourth person if necessary. Experience is so limited with job sharing in agriculture that an employer would benefit from finding a nonfarm employer and employee with job sharing experience to gain their insights about the pros and cons.

Concluding Comment

Job design is a tool for helping to motivate and challenge employees. Like all other motivational tools, it fails to provide a magical answer for all employees in all situations. Nevertheless, inattention to job analysis, job design, job enrichment and work scheduling means that motivation problems will be created that need not be created.

Employees are likely to appreciate an employer's efforts to make their jobs as motivational and challenging as feasible. Many employees will welcome the opportunity to help improve their jobs. They will see the benefits for themselves and for the business.

Traditional jobs can be changed. An employer's imagination and creativity applied to job design have the potential to yield impressive results.

7 Legal Issues GOES HERE

The Family that Farms Together

– Meeting the Challenges of Life 'Down on the Farm' –

Andrew McCrea

Managing a workforce can be an overwhelming task at times. When the person in charge of those employees in also financially responsible for the company, the job becomes even more difficult. Then add in the fact that some of those employees are also family members who may someday assume ownership and control of the business and what you get is a role with tremendous rewards, but also a position of great responsibility and many challenges.

There is no perfect plan to manage a family farm business as each farm is far different. However, there are some basic principles that we can keep in mind to help us if we find ourselves in a family farm operation. These tips are for everyone in the business, whether you are the person in charge, a younger family member who will someday be taking on more leadership and ownership opportunities, or an employee working for a family farm operation.

As James Hanson and Dale Johnson of the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources have pointed out in there research "Pro-Farm Leadership and Management Leadership and Management of Farm Businesses", one of the most challenging parts of being a leader in a family farm situation is that the owner/operator is responsible for both leadership and management.

Leadership carries with it the importance of a long term vision and goals. The owner must be aware of how the business might be passed on to the next generation. However, this owner also has management responsibilities, having the duty to take care of day-to-day operations and making sure the farm is running efficiently and effectively.

In larger companies, these roles are often divided among upper level management. Often a board of directors is in charge of a company's vision and goals while managers are called upon to do just that, manage the operation to achieve those goals. In the family farm situation, family members find that both roles are heaped upon them.

Tips on Leading and Managing at the Same Time

So then, how do we accomplish both roles at the same time? It is important that there is constant communication between all family members. The importance of discussing the future around the dinner table or over the phone (with family owners/partners not on the farmstead) is of critical importance. It sounds simple, but many problems arise because family members don't have these discussions or they put them off. It is not always necessary to come to a conclusion or have a plan set in stone.

At least ask questions of the next generation. Find out what they value in the operation. Find out what they think about the future of agriculture and the family business. If you are the person "in charge", include them on some or all of the trips you make to town when you are making seed and feed decisions. Have them accompany you to the FSA office when making plans about government programs. This is the information the next generation will need in order to effectively lead the farm business. It also communicates to them that you value their opinion and want their ideas.

My grandfather was a master at this. I still remember the day we stopped along the highway near an old farmstead that had been placed in the Conservation Reserve Program. He shared with me his ideas on how that piece of land should be farmed if I was ever able to buy it when it came out of CRP. My grandfather passed away, but the land did come up for sale and our farm bought it. The plan grandfather had discussed with me is the plan we are using to farm that new acreage. Farm leaders even look beyond their years and include the future generation in those plans.

If the owner/operator focuses on his or her leadership role, the management role becomes easier. In Hanson and Johnson's study they note that "a manager allocates scarce resources (time, labor, land, capital, skills) to capture opportunities." That's very true, and those opportunities are based on the long term vision the leader(s) of the farm have adopted. In making the day-to-day operational decisions on the farm, it is important to share with employees/family members why such management decisions are made. Helping them gain insight in the process makes them freer to share their ideas. It makes the farm something much more than just a job or a place to work. It makes the farm a business in which their thoughts and views are important.

Motivating the Workforce, Especially Non-Family Members

Farm owners are in a big trap if they believe the only thing that keeps farm employees at their operation is the pay and benefits. Sure those are important factors, but from experience I can tell you that they are not the most important. Dr. Bernard Erven at Ohio State University has researched and spoken on the topic of motivating and retaining employees. He says a critical first step is to find out what the employees needs are and find out how your operation can best satisfy those needs.

First, talk with farm employees and help design their jobs to fulfill those needs while still fulfilling the needs of the farm business. Maybe the employee used to work at a job that required mechanical skills. Find ways to tap into those skills or get their advice when those types of problems arise.

Second, set them up to succeed. Remember, you may have been around this particular farm for decades, but they may not have much experience with farm work, let alone on this farm. Get them started on the right foot by giving them jobs at which they can do well. Remember, when they succeed, you succeed.

Third, provide a premiere work environment. Face it, that's why most employees stay with a job. Farm operations often can not compete with other businesses when it comes to pay and benefits such as health insurance. The good news is that farm employees usually care about a lot more than pay and health insurance. Family farms offer a wide range of benefits that many other workplaces can not begin to compete with.

For instance, the employee can have a major impact in the productivity of the farm, because they represent a huge percentage of the work force. Give them some "ownership" by taking them with you when you sell livestock. After all, they helped raise the herd. Give them recognition for their effort in helping the stock sell well.

Create a great atmosphere in which their efforts are appreciated. One of our employees had an important announcement for us on his one year anniversary at the farm. He told us this had been a special year because 365 days had passed and his boss had never sworn at him. Sure he did things wrong during that time, and maybe we swore in our head a few times, but the right work environment paid off.

If your employee(s) has a wife or family, make sure to give them a gift or card on their birthday. Find out when they will have an important family get together and allow them to get away a little early for the big event if it would help ease travel. If you're one of those farmers that gets hats and apparel from almost every seed, feed and farm equipment dealer on the planet, give your employees some of the gifts. You may have lots of them, but few of those dealers ever take time to give something to the employees. Your crew will often take pride in wearing the logo of something they use every day and they'll appreciate you passing along some of those gifts to them. When you own your own small business you have the ability to really show you care...and when you care about your employees' needs and helping them succeed, you are providing the very thing that workers often seek.

Conclusion

Our longer format program helps examine some of these subjects in much greater detail. No, a short article about leading and managing the family farm business does not provide all the answers. Each operation and the people involved are different. However, the principles we've identified are some tips that have worked in our operation and seem to be proven by employee research. Above all, show you care about the other family members and employees. Involve them as much as possible in all aspects of the operation and provide a great environment in which to work. Family farms can offer this personal care that many other businesses can not. We may think that we don't have much to offer, but in reality, our small business is the very thing many families and employees seek.

Employee Management for Production Agriculture

Employee Burnout ... Detecting and Preventing

Dorothy Lecher
Prema-Lean Pork, LLC

What is Burnout?

Employee burnout is not a temporary situation after a difficult week. It is a physical, emotional, and mental state of exhaustion caused by a demanding environment and/or an inability or desire to meet those demands. Burnout can show up as poor job performance, lack of motivation, and poor customer service. Untreated, it can lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia, depression and more. Some of your employees may be using alcohol or drugs to self-medicate. Middle managers are the least likely to seek assistance because they don't want to admit they can't handle the stress. Yet, they are most likely to become burned out.

What are the causes of employee Burnout?

The exact cause of employee burnout varies from person to person. Employee burnout can be caused by the workplace of recognition; lack of control, by the employee (i.e. unrealistic expectations; inability to set and maintain boundaries), or by a poor employee/workplace match (i.e. personal values conflict with job; lack of skills).

What factors seem to contribute to burnout stress?
1. Expectation of greater workload and longer hours.
2. Loss of individual autonomy, predictable income, trust and respect of your professional role, and over-scheduling.
3. Pressure to take on more risks as your business system demands compliance and to decrease costs but increase "quality."
4. Inability to balance personal and professional life.
5. Decreased company or peer socialization and collegiality.
6. Lack of positive and timely feedback from management or the owners of the company.
7. Difficulty in saying "No" (at work, home, church, volunteer activities, or in the community).
8. Unrealistic expectations from customers or employees.

What are the symptoms of Burnout?

Though not a precisely defined medical condition, burnout has recognizable symptoms and is a result of prolonged stress.
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Sadness and depression
- Negativity
- Increased cynicism
- Deceased creativity
- Quickness to anger
- Defensiveness
- Edginess and quickness to blame others
- Detachment (especially from clients and staff)
- Workers feel lethargic, empty and no longer able to take satisfaction in their jobs.
- Workers begin to question the value of the tasks they perform.
- Hate to go to work, not just on an occasional morning, but on most mornings.

Spotting the Burnout

Take a quick test to measure an employee's potential for burnout by answering questions about him.

- Does he seem tired all the time?
- Is he absent more than usual, or often sick at work?
- Is he constantly late?
- Has he not had a real vacation in more than a year?
- Does he seem to be more cynical than he used to be?
- Has he lost his humor?
- Does he bad-mouth customers and suppliers?
- Is he treating people around him like objects, calling them by derogatory names?
- Does he complain a lot about problems with co-workers?
- Is he often hostile toward other operations or units?
- Does he avoid talking to supervisors?
- Do supervisors have to seek him out to get feedback on the job?
- Does he usually get stuck with a lot of repetitive, menial jobs?
- Is he constantly disorganized, rushed and behind in his work?
- Does he commonly forget deadlines and appointments?
- Do routine things seem to be piling up around him?
- Is he reluctant to take a break until a project is finished?
- Does he spend breaks talking about work or trying to catch up on personal tasks?
- Does he hang around work at the end of the day as if he has no place to go?
- Does he often complain that he doesn't have enough time to do the job right?
- Is he unclear on which supervisor to answer to?
- Does he often get conflicting orders from different supervisors?

- Does he complain that the job wasn't what he thought it would be when he took it?
- Does he seem to be less concerned about the health and welfare of the animals?
- Is he in his second or fifth year of employment?
- Has he complained about low pay in relation to supervisors?

Score 1 point for each "yes".

0 to 5 points: The worker seems to be successfully balancing his work and personal life. You management style probably encourages a sense of fulfillment in the job.

5 to 20 points: He may be functioning under less than optimum energy caused by some degree of burnout. Slight burnout can often be handled by encouraging workers to get some exercise, proper rest and good nutrition, as well as spending some time alone, putting in some time with family and friends, liking for new interests and hobbies, and taking regular vacations and days off. Try to set an example in the operation that it's OK to enjoy a few carefree moments during the day.

20 to 25 points: The worker is most likely in some stage of burnout. Severe, job-threatening burnout often occurs when people reach a point at which they realize their life's goals are going unmet. You should act as soon as you see any signs of such severe burnout. Use job descriptions and reviews to explore those feelings that can lead to burnout. Look at your responsibility assignments, compensation and bonus scales, and vacation schedule. Consider re-setting goals to make them achievable. Set up effective performance appraisals. Give regular feedback on progress.

What To Do About Burnout And How To Get Fired Up Again

Burnout is preventable. It requires an understanding that "heat" in the form of enthusiasm for a job is good for the employee and the business, but too much or prolonged heat can result in a scorched employee. An understanding of the factors that lead to the feeling of burnout is important to the recovery process. If you don't know what contributed to burnout, you won't know what corrective measures to undertake. This will require an honest and in-depth assessment of how you became burned out. What self-esteem needs were you trying to meet by your personal and business related choices and decisions? Is there another way to address those needs in a less stressful manner?

"Is it necessary to leave my current position or company in order to overcome the burnout syndrome?" is an often-asked question. There are no absolute answers. If your corporation expects that you must continue working as you have, and if there is not an appreciation or acknowledgement of your current condition, it may be necessary to change your environment. However, it would be an unusual corporation today that is unaware of the effects that prolonged demands are having on employees. Therefore, **it is appropriate to first approach the company with an overview of what you are experiencing and ask for assistance in overcoming the burnout syndrome**. There are risks that your confession may be fodder for the management or ownership of a company. However, unless burnout is addressed and treated, the effects will continue to erode away at your job productivity, quality of your work and attitude about your job.

As a manager or employer, do you encourage or even insist that employees take time off to vacate and recreate? Do you monitor your own actions to determine if you are setting an example that others will follow?

We can also learn a lesson about burnout from Mother Nature. **She demonstrates the importance of balance.** Even she recognizes that plants, trees and animals can't constantly grow and expand. They need an opportunity to rest and to replenish diminished resources. She provides this balance through the seasons of the year to accommodate the needs of the future.

Ways to reduce Burnout:
• Allow employees to talk freely with one another.
• Reduce personal conflicts on the job.
• Give employees adequate control over how they do their work.
• Ensure that staffing and expense budgets are adequate.
• Talk openly with employees.
• Support employees' efforts.
• Provide competitive personal leave and vacation benefits.
• Maintain current levels of employees' benefits.
• Recognize and reward employees for their accomplishments and contributions.

Another consideration is to try implementing a burnout avoidance program within your company. The components of the program include monitoring employees who look like candidates at both ends and trying to conquer and master all in an unrealistic time frame.

Burnout is costly, and it is preventable. It takes a personal commitment by the employees, the management and by the company to take proactive steps to prevent or address early signs of burnout. It will take your commitment as a manager and as a person to detect and address those situations that lead up to this stress related syndrome.

Attitude

"The longer I live, the more I realize
the impact of attitude on life.
Attitude, to me, is more important that facts.
It is more important than the past, than education,
than money, than circumstances,
than failures, than successes,
than what other people think or say or do.
It is more important
than appearance, giftedness or skill.
It will make or break a company...a church...a home.
The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day
regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.
We cannot change our past...
we cannot change the fact
that people will act in a certain way.
We cannot change the inevitable.
The only thing we can do
is play on the one string we have
and that is our attitude...
I am convinced that
life is 10% what happens to me
and....90% how I react to it. And so it is with you....
we are in charge of our attitudes."

Managing Hispanic Employees and Understanding their Culture

Thomas R. Maloney
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The number of Hispanic employees working in agricultural and horticultural businesses has increased dramatically in recent years. This increase in people from Latin American cultures has introduced change into our workplaces and in some cases our communities. Decades ago, the United States was referred to as a "melting pot." As groups of people of different nationalities, ethnicities, races and religions came to this country they came together and blended to eventually resemble one another. Today, the term "salad bowl" is often used to reflect the mixture of people in American society. While we are all one population we value our individual identities. Immigrants today often have the expectation of maintaining their cultural identity while participating in the American way of life.

As agricultural and horticultural employers become familiar with the Hispanic workforce, cross-cultural understanding is essential to building healthy interpersonal relationships and strong communities. It is also essential in the workplace where supervisors find it important to take cultural values and beliefs into consideration as they manage their employees.

Culture is defined as the set of values, attitudes, and beliefs that members come to share. Culture guides how a group of people perceives the world and how life is organized and experienced. Each person within a culture possesses learned ways of finding meaning in their actions and experiences. Culture is not genetic; it is learned from ones social environment.

Hofstede's Four Dimensions of Culture

In 1980, Geert Hofstede, a scholar and researcher from the Netherlands introduced a framework proposing four dimensions of culture. He defined a dimension as an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. He suggested that people carry "mental programs" which develop in the family and in early childhood and are reinforced in a person's organizations and community. Hofstede further suggested that these mental programs include a component of national culture and are expressed in the values that people of different countries posses.

Hofstede's dimensions of culture were based on a worldwide survey of over 116,000 employees in a large United States multinational company.

He named the four dimensions:
1. Power Distance
2. Collectivism vs. Individualism
3. Femininity vs. Masculinity
4. Uncertainty Avoidance

These dimensions of culture are often used to explain: different ways of structuring organizations, different motivations of people within organizations and different issues people and organizations face within society. By developing an understanding of the dimensions of culture

small business managers can improve their ability to relate to and supervise their Hispanic employees.

Power Distance

Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. When power distance in a society is high, people believe that everyone has their rightful place and they understand that not everyone is treated equally. When power distance is low people believe that everyone should have equal rights and the opportunity to change their position in society.

While the following definitions reflect high and low power distance, it is likely that most work places will be between these two extremes with elements of both.

In high power distance societies people believe that there should be a well-defined order of inequality and everyone has their rightful place.

In Latin American and other cultures where power distance is high, the following values, beliefs and characteristics often prevail:
- There are large income differences in society
- Those in authority exercise absolute power
- Those in authority are respected and not questioned
- Superiors consider subordinates as different from themselves
- The ideal boss is autocratic and paternalistic
- There is a tendency to accept one's place in society

In low power distance societies people believe that everyone should have equal access to money and opportunity. The United States tends to be a low power distance society.

In American culture, and other cultures where power distance is low, the following values, beliefs and characteristics often prevail:
- Belief that everyone should have equal rights
- Belief that subordinates are people like me
- Relatively small income differentials in society
- Belief that all should have equal access to money and opportunity

Collectivism vs. Individualism

Individualism is defined as the extent to which people prefer to take care of themselves and their immediate families, remaining independent from groups and organizations. In individualist cultures, such as the United States, common characteristics include:

- Interests of the individual prevail over interests of the group
- Children are taught to be independent
- Individuals tend to take care of themselves rather than relying on groups.

In individualist societies, common beliefs regarding work include:
- Work goals include personal time, freedom, and challenge
- Individuals see themselves as somewhat independent of the organization
- People are managed as individuals

Collectivism refers to the extent to which people from very early ages are integrated into strong cohesive "in groups". The "in group" becomes the major source of one's identity and is viewed as the only protection against the hardships of life. In a collectivist culture loyalty to one's "in group" is expected.

In collectivist cultures, such as those found in Latin America, family, friends

and relationships are very important. Common societal characteristics include:
- Financial support of family is important and expected
- Sense of belonging is intense yet limited to family and close friends
- People who are not family or close friends are often mistrusted

In collectivist cultures, common beliefs regarding work include:
- Interaction at work is important and expected
- Training and effective use of skills are emphasized
- Employees tend to be dependent on the organization
- Management of groups is emphasized
- Relationships prevail over tasks
- Role of the manager is to support the group

Masculinity vs. Femininity

Hofstede's work suggests that each culture recognizes some behavior as more closely identified with males and some behaviors more closely identified with females. While gender roles vary from one society to another, there are common themes among most countries. Common masculine values often include: assertiveness, performance, ambition, achievement, material possessions and progress. Common feminine values include: people and warm relationships, quality of life, sensitivity to insult, nurturance, concern for the less fortunate and modesty.

In cultures ranked high in masculinity, managers are more likely to be concerned with task accomplishment than nurturing social relationships. In masculine societies, motivation is more likely to be based on the acquisition of money than the quality of life. Leaders in masculine cultures are more likely to emphasize bottom line profits. Conversely, feminine cultures tend to take more interest in the employee's well

being and demonstrate concern for social values for men and women. Countries, which tend to have more masculine traits include the United States, Japan and Ireland. Countries with more feminine values include Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. Most countries indicate moderately high or moderately low masculinity tendencies. There are very few extremes. In Latin American countries, we see a combination of both masculine and feminine traits within the culture and in the workplace.

Characteristics commonly thought of as masculine traits include:
- Aggressiveness and combativeness
- Ambition and very hard work, driven by necessity
- Emphasis on material possessions

Characteristics commonly thought of as feminine traits include:
- Emphasis on people and warm relationships
- Sensitivity to insult induces face-saving behavior
- Public criticism is considered unacceptable
- Tendency to appreciate a friendly rather than a competitive workplace
- Tendency to avoid upsetting the boss

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened or uncomfortable dealing with uncertain or unknown factors. In some societies high levels of uncertainty can create extreme levels of anxiety. Anxiety in this case is defined as the state of being uneasy or worried about what may happen. In response to the anxiety over uncertainty, societies often react in three ways; they create laws; they embrace religion; and they adopt technology. Laws help to establish norms of behavior for the members of society providing more security. By embracing religion, people reduce

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anxiety by believing "my fate is in the hands of God". The adoption of technology helps to reduce accidents or disasters making the population feel more safe and secure.

Examples of countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance include: Mexico, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Peru and Japan. Examples of countries exhibiting low uncertainty avoidance are the USA, Norway, Great Britain, Sweden and Denmark. Hispanic cultures tend to be higher in uncertainty avoidance.

The following characteristics are common in high uncertainty avoidance societies: Many precise laws and rules, citizen protest repressed, conservatism, law and order, religious, political and ideological fundamentalism, intolerance and less showing of emotions.

Characteristics common in low uncertainty avoidance societies such as the United States include: Few general laws and rules, citizen protest acceptable, tolerance, moderation, no persecution for different beliefs, and more showing of emotions.

Effective managers in high uncertainty avoidance societies provide job security, a great amount of written rules and procedures, and opportunities to decrease uncertainty through consensus building. People from high uncertainty avoidance cultures look for structure in their institutions and relationships, which tends to make events more interpretable and predictable. There is an emotional need for rules and structured situations and effective managers make an effort to provide this.

Managerial Implications of Culture

Small business managers who have experience supervising Hispanic employees report that learning to supervise employees from another culture is a gradual process. Cross-cultural understanding is essential for effective cross-cultural supervision.

The managerial implications of culture are best understood by considering the importance of core values. Managers and supervisors should consider the following implications of culture:

- Culture has a strong influence on a person's core values.
- People work to obtain what they value, for example, physical needs, life style and self-esteem.
- Values shape attitudes and beliefs about work including success, wealth, survival, authority, equity and competition.
- Values govern how we wish to be treated and how we treat others.

Managers who understand these implications of culture are in a better position to relate to and effectively supervise their employees.

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Employee Discipline and Termination

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When an employee has a supportive supervisor, he has the potential to stretch far, to feel greatly valued, and to continually grow on the job, making this a positive reinforcing cycle.

Unfortunately, the opposite can be just as true. The first instinct of most supervisors is to "tighten the reins" and increase control over those who are perceived as having failed to meet their expectations. These apparent under-performers are quick to sense a lack of confidence in their work and in their decisions and often (1) become more defensive, refusing to make decisions they feel their bosses may overturn anyway, and (2) withdraw mentally or physically.

How often do employees come to organizations having inherited this over-defensive-can't-do behavior from somewhere in their past, and how often do we provoke it anew? Regardless of the source, keeping an open communication line between the supervisor and the employee is the only hope for dealing with such defensive traits.

Other common reasons for poor worker performance are lack of skill, knowledge, or ability. Lack of motivation or even purposeful misconduct may also be involved. Regardless of where the problems originated, a well carried-out disciplinary process is yet another avenue to deal with performance challenges. Overdependence on this tool is a likely indicator of weaknesses in other management areas. Alluding to employee discipline, a Russian farm manager astutely observed, "The cow that is beaten very often will not give very good milk."[2]

When discipline is properly carried out, challenges are often resolved before they get out of hand. Most farm employers experience discomfort when disciplining or dismissing personnel. There are both management and legal implications of terminating an employee. Even when taking such drastic action, a farmer who has followed the process outlined below can sleep better at night. Such a farmer knows the worker was fully aware of the unwanted behavior and its consequences–yet still decided to engage in it.

Effective Discipline

Misconduct can be classified according to specific behaviors, for instance:
- effort (e.g., working at a reduced speed, poor quality, tardiness, sleeping on the job, wasting time);
- co-worker relations (e.g., fighting on the job, lack of cooperation);
- subordinate-supervisor relations (e.g., insubordination, lack of follow-through);
- supervisor-subordinate relations (e.g., favoritism, withholding of key information, mistreatment, abuse of power);
- handling of tools or company property (e.g., misuse of tools, neglect);
- harassment or workplace violence (e.g., verbal or physical abuse, threats, bullying);
- dishonesty; and
- safety and other practices (e.g., not wearing safety equipment, horseplay, carrying weapons on the job, working under the influence of alcohol or drugs).

Our discussion on effective discipline is based on the principles of just cause. Just cause "sums up the test used by employees in judging whether management acted fairly in enforcing company rules."[3] Co-workers, judges, juries, and arbitrators may also be evaluating how fairly an employer acted. Arbitrators' rules of fairness can be distilled into the following:

1. Develop fair rules and consequences
2. Clearly communicate policies
3. Conduct a fair investigation
4. Balance consistency and flexibility
5. Use corrective–not punitive–action[4]

Develop fair rules and consequences

As a farmer you get to make the rules and determine the consequences for their violation, as long as these rules are fair and defensible. For almost any misbehavior, there are many shades of wrongdoing.

Just as there are different degrees of fault, there are different degrees of "punishment" to deal with offenses. Tools to respond to infractions include (1) communication of the standard, (2) disapproval, (3) verbal warning, (4) written warning, (5) suspension, and (6) termination.

Clearly communicate policies

Communication is the key link to a successful disciplinary process. Rules and consequences must be well known by both those who apply them and those who are subject to them. It is not possible to conceive of every case of worker misbehavior, however. It is helpful to use a model for communicating the concept of progressive discipline (i.e., stiffer penalties for more serious violations and increasingly more serious penalties for repeat offenses).

Conduct a fair investigation

Listen to the accused employee's story first. A preliminary interview should be conducted with the employee before assigning penalties–from the least to the most serious infractions. This interview may be part of a more in-depth investigation. It is not uncommon to see a supervisor begin to lecture, nag, accuse, or scold an employee first, and then, almost as an afterthought, ask for the employee's perspective. By then, the damage has been done. The employee may have had a very good reason for her behavior. While some supervisors may now apologize (which, while nice, will not totally remove bad feelings nor prevent the erosion of trust and good morale), others are just as likely to continue to chastise the worker in an effort not to lose face before her.

If emotions are running high, it may be necessary to set up a later time to meet. It may be better to delegate the interview to another member of management who can keep calm, however, than to postpone it. If too much time goes by after the incident, the facts of the case may change in everyone's mind.

Document facts, discussions, and decisions made. Who was involved? What rules were violated? When did the problem occur (dates and times)? Were there any witnesses?[13] John Steines,[14] a security consultant, likes to have each individual who was interviewed write up a summary of the discussion. If any important elements are left out, then the interviewee can be reminded of this, and asked to complete the missing information. The interviewee is also asked to initial the investigator's notes for correctness and completeness.

Balance consistency and flexibility

A disciplinary program seeks to treat workers in a consistent manner. Few infractions are exactly the same, however. Factors to consider include the severity of the incident, the employee's attitude, the previous history of an individual, and mitigating circumstances. An excessive number of exceptions, though, can diminish efforts to achieve

fairness and improve morale. Exceptions should be clearly defensible. Once again, it helps to make rules with the best employee in mind.

If you find yourself having to apologize for applying a rule, the rule should not be applied in this instance. Consistency of application may be improved when supervisors discuss among each other critical incidents representing worker misconduct. When possible, incidents should be modified to preserve the anonymity of those involved. Incidents may be presented to supervisors who can discuss possible ways of handling them. After evaluation, rules may need to be added, clarified, changed or dropped.

Use corrective–not punitive–action

After the investigation, if the incident is worth documenting, it is serious enough to take official disciplinary action. A consequence must be formulated keeping in mind the purpose of the disciplinary process. To obtain both maximum management and legal benefits from discipline, the response ought not be punitive in nature. The supervisor must act as if truly interested in helping the worker with the problem. To do so, the employee needs to feel the supervisor's concern for her. These positive comments may be needed over the next few days. Most important, the supervisor who makes it clear that this is not something personal against the employee, but just against a specific behavior, is more likely to succeed as a coach and mentor. While the supervisor will want to be firm, there is no need to create an enemy in the process.

A related communication issue is that of maintaining control throughout the process. The supervisor needs to remember who is in charge of making management decisions.

A formal disciplinary episode needs to include the following four elements:

- Be specific about what the employee did wrong–without getting bogged down in specifics. Explaining the reasons for the needed change may be appropriate at this time.
- Be clear about what the employee must do to improve (this is not always obvious).
- Advise the employee of the official nature of the discipline (that it will be documented and a copy will go to the employee and the other in his file).
- Inform the employee about future consequence(s) if there is no improvement. (Option: after telling the employee about the next consequence for non-improvement, explain that if the problem continues, eventually it may lead to termination.)

A written document should be clear to someone who knows nothing about the situation. Do not finalize a written expression until someone you trust can read it over and give you constructive suggestions. This person should check for the following:

- Does the tone and substance of the warning show that you care about the worker?
- Are positive, sincere comments made about the employee? (These comments should be sincere and specific: "we really value your excellent welding skills" is better than "you are such a great worker.")
- Is the language so clear that anyone would understand it?
- Are all four of the basic disciplinary warning elements included?

Have the employee sign or initial in acknowledgment that he has received (not necessarily agreed with) the notice. Alternatively, you may want to send a certified letter, or ask for others to witness its delivery. If the employee does

not want to sign the disciplinary note, it is best not to force the issue.

Supervisors may find that employees seem more cooperative after receiving an initial disciplinary note. An important caution, however, is not to use these as a way to obtain employee compliance. When overused, disciplinary notices lose their power. Employers should not wait for employees to make a mistake so a disciplinary notice can be given to them. Instead, whenever possible, such difficulties are best discussed informally before they become a problem.

Management action may be considered punitive if it is: intimidating, aggressive, provocative, lacks professionalism, applied hastily, or seems out of line with the offense. An injustice may also be done when guilty employees are permitted to get away without any consequences. If rules have not been enforced, credibility may be an issue. One manager repeatedly warned an employee of the need to either improve or else be fired. The worker was eventually terminated but sued because he did not really believe the employer would carry out the threat.

Investigative suspension. If an incident appears to call for termination, first suspend the employee for a few days. If the worker's safety is involved, have someone drive him home. To repeat, no matter how hideous a specific infraction may be, a worker ought not be terminated on the spot. However, when the termination is not triggered by a specific event or incident, but rather, over time it has become clear that the employee is not a match for the job (e.g., simply does not seem to have the motivation, job skills, or ability to work without constant supervision), then an investigative suspension may just add unnecessary dramatics to the situation. Termination without the suspension is preferable under these circumstances, but this in no way reduces the obligation of the employer to carefully investigate, document, and coach the employee.

Employee Termination

Employee termination is often the last step in an unsuccessful attempt to help a worker meet work standards. Clear management implications include the cost associated with the selection and training of a new employee; the effect the termination may have on the morale of the discharged employee as well as those who remain; and the consequences on unemployment insurance costs.

Terminating personnel has been called the "death penalty of employment." Employees readily accept an employer's right to choose who to hire (as long as no illegal discrimination takes place). Once hired, however, most workers feel an employer's right to fire should be limited: the longer a person is permitted to stay on the job (even if not a capable employee), the greater are her rights to the job.

Perhaps a better analogy is that of workplace divorce. Like in divorce, the parties involved can choose to be combative or cordial. While it is a mistake to take any analogy too far, there are other aspects of marriage that merit comparison: both parties share some responsibility for having chosen each other, and for making the relationship grow and succeed afterward.

From a legal perspective, firing an employee may lead to wrongful termination charges. In the past, the "at-will doctrine" controlled most terminations in the United States. For instance, the California Labor Code states, "an employment, having no specified term, may be terminated at the will of either party ..."[21]

Employers had the right to fire an employee at any time or for almost any reason. Likewise, the employee could quit "at will." At-will termination rights have eroded substantially, however, as a

result of both statutory provisions and court cases.

Erosion of the "at-will" doctrine

Both public policy and litigation have combined to erode the "at-will" doctrine. The law prohibits the discipline and termination of employees (just as it does in other aspects of the employment relationship) based on protected factors, such as sex, race, age. Nor can employers retaliate against workers who have turned them in (whistle blowing) for violations of public policy.

"At-will" vs. "just cause" policies

Most labor attorneys and consultants are advising growers on how to guard their "at-will" rights. They suggest farm employers include "at-will" statements in job applications and employee handbooks and eliminate any reference to job security.

Typical at-will statements include: "We reserve the right to fire a worker at any time, with or without cause," and "We reserve the right to terminate an employee at any time and for any reason, just as the employee has the right to quit at any time and for any reason." These right-to-fire affirmations are intended to make clear to arbitrators and judges that the farmer has not given away any legal rights to terminate at-will.

To successfully defend an "at-will" policy, farmers cannot simply hide the policy in the fine print of an application or handbook. Nor can they have it both ways by maintaining a written "at-will" policy while they contradict it verbally or in practice. The courts may construe the oral promises to be a waiver of the written policies.

Firing with dignity

The words firing and dignity hardly belong together. Nevertheless, there are a few principles we can keep in mind that will help preserve a certain amount of dignity to that employee we are ready to let go.

Persons who suffer job loss may go through predictable emotional stages that may include lowered self-esteem, despair, shame, anger, and feelings of rejection. The greater the positive feelings the employee held towards the supervisor, farm enterprise or job and the longer the period of employment, the more poignant these feelings may be.

Before discussing the details of the termination interview, we need to assume that the decision has already been made with much care; that it will not be a surprise to the worker (it is vital that the employee has previously received an explicit written notice that his termination is being considered); that appropriate and well documented disciplinary, counseling and coaching measures have already taken place; and that you are working with the help of a qualified labor attorney (there are legal questions to be answered at every step) and labor management specialist.

If it has become clear that the employee ought to be terminated, how and when does one best face the employee to deliver the bad news? A few decisions need to be made before actually meeting with the employee. This is one of those situations where there is no substitute for total preparation.

Pre-meeting decisions and preparation

A major concern of people who are terminated is the fear of what will be said about them behind their backs. It is a good policy to reassure workers that except for the management team involved in the termination, or others on a need-to-know basis, that the issue will not be discussed with current or prospective employees. After the termination, management must encourage individuals who have questions to speak directly with the employee.

Recommendations. While there is a temptation to provide letters of recom-

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mendation to terminated employees, these could be used against the employer at a later date if they contradict the reasons for termination. Farmers are particularly vulnerable when they discharge an employee after making positive comments to the worker during performance appraisals or by letters of recommendation at the time of discharge. In the event an employer ends up in court, he may be asked, "Well, Mr. Grower, are you lying to us now or were you lying then?"[32]

Resignation or termination. Some enterprises under specific conditions permit employees to resign rather than be fired. It can make it difficult for terminated employees to find employment when they have to put "fired" in job applications under "reason for leaving the last job." When an employee is given the choice to resign or be terminated, this is considered as a case of "constructive discharge" and is no different than a termination unless accompanied by a termination agreement (see below). Employers also need to make decisions about when they will or will not contend former employees' decisions to apply for unemployment insurance. Employees may think that the only reason the employer is suggesting their resignation is to save on unemployment insurance. Farmers who opt not to contest unemployment insurance payments should make that clear to the terminated employee. This may be done in writing when using a termination agreement (see next).

Another potential tool to avoid wrongful termination charges is the termination agreement with a severance package. Employers pay workers separation pay (e.g., 3 to 12 month's wages, depending on length of employment and reasons for the termination) in exchange for the worker's agreement to resign and not sue. These arrangements may require very specific rules to be followed, and in some circumstances may not be consid-

ered valid, so you will want to consult your attorney. Termination agreements can be an excellent device, especially for those cases related to general worker performance and productivity. If the employer did not conduct a systematic selection process when hiring this individual (including the use of validated job sample tests), then the employer shares, as we said, the responsibility for the poor performance. The same can be true if an employee has been permitted to perform at a lower than acceptable level for some time without documented efforts to help the individual improve. Termination agreements are most likely to succeed when the employee is aware that the organization is not pleased with her past performance, and the realization does not come as a surprise. Employees may welcome the opportunity to resign now with a few months of extra pay and their self-esteem bruised but not as deeply wounded, rather than get involved in a protracted disciplinary process.

Separation bonus. Employers expect workers who quit to give two-weeks notice or more. The same courtesy is owed to the worker, except that it is better to simply pay that time as a separation bonus and give the employee the time to look for another job. It is best to "relieve the employee of any further responsibility but to themselves."[35] When explaining this policy to the employee, the stress needs to be placed on helping the employee concentrate on his future needs rather than on shuffling the person out of sight.

When giving the employee a separation bonus (or a more formal severance package mentioned above), it should be given after all appropriate papers are signed and all business property such as pickups, keys, two-way radios, computers, bank cards, and any pertinent passwords are returned. Having a detailed checklist ahead of time of what

these items are is important.[36] The check, however, should be ready as the employee may be able to fulfill these requirements without delay. In some cases there may be mandated delays to the separation pay related to the termination agreement.

Pay and Papers. Pay, including any benefits and unused vacation, needs to be delivered on the spot. This is good business practice and frequently is the law. Likewise, if an employee has earned part of a bonus, this should also be paid. It is better to err on the generous side. If papers that need to be signed are related to any continuing benefits or other like matters, they should be available right away. Any unfinished paperwork can be taken care of by mail rather than inconveniencing the employee by requiring her presence at the job site. In the case of an investigative suspension that results in termination, the employee also needs to be paid for "reporting time"[39] when she comes back to work for the final termination meeting.

Escorting the employee. When it is time for the employee to turn in ranch property, some employers escort the worker to his workplace. When sensitive matters are involved, or the possibility of sabotage exists, such a policy not only protects the enterprise but also the employee. In cases where termination decisions are being considered during an investigative suspension, employees may also be requested to turn in sensitive company property. It can always be returned later if the decision is made not to terminate.

The termination meeting

The meeting tone established by management should be one of cordiality and empathy. In some cases, the best way to start the meeting is to say something like, "You will probably not be surprised to find out that things are just not working out."

The bad news can be given next. If there is any chance that the employee does not understand why he is being terminated, the reasons should be explained now. Speaking to an employee about the reason for termination needs to be done calmly and with empathy, without gloating. The supervisor who has followed a proper disciplinary process will have little to add at this time—but should encourage questions. If there is no one specific reason why the employee is being terminated, but rather a combination of factors, then a brief statement to that effect would be appropriate.

Two common mistakes at this stage are when the supervisor (1) is so vague that the employee does not know he has been terminated; and (2) talks too much. Silence can make interpersonal situations uncomfortable, and in an effort to fill this silence, the supervisor is likely to say more than he should.

Anything that reduces the totality of the separation is likely to be appreciated by the terminated employee. Depending on the degree of friendship developed over time, a follow-up card or note, or a phone call from time to time may help the former employee through this difficult transition.

Summary

Effective discipline can protect the agricultural enterprise, the supervisor who enforces the rules, and the subordinates subject to the regulations. Everyone benefits when rules and consequences for violations are carefully formulated, clearly communicated, and consistently carried out. Many potential challenges are often resolved before they get out of hand.

Employee termination is often the last step in an unsuccessful attempt to help a worker meet work standards. There are both legal and management implications to employee termination. Two opposite approaches to termina-

tions are "just cause" and "at will." Just cause requires more management preparation and control but normally has a greater potential to reduce cases of arbitrary treatment, eliminating some wrongful discharge cases before they happen.

Confronting employees during a disciplinary or termination interview takes much interpersonal skill and preparation. Throughout, it is important to distinguish between the employee as a person and any unwanted behavior to avoid building artificial walls between the supervisor and worker. If the employee needs to be disciplined or terminated, this is best done while permitting the employee to preserve as much dignity as possible.

Management can help coach and mentor an employee into improving his performance or behavior, but at the end it is the worker who must decide if the job is worth the effort. The responsibility to improve must remain with the employee. Where the employer shares some of the fault for the employee's poor performance, a termination agreement can be a very powerful tool. Such an agreement may meet some of the needs of the employer and the terminated employee.

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13 Professionalism goes here

Managing Employee Performance

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Employees often want to know the answer to two questions: "What is my job?" and "How am I doing?" When properly conducted, a performance management process helps small business employers provide employees with answers to both of these questions. **Performance management is the daily process of working toward previously established performance expectations followed by a formal performance appraisal.** The traditional performance appraisal or review is one element of this process. To many employers, performance appraisal refers to an evaluation, which often is conducted once a year and accompanies the process of giving employees raises. While periodic performance appraisal interviews are important, they are only a part of an effective performance appraisal system. To have the greatest impact, performance management must be a process with several phases. It should be looked at as an ongoing process of communicating performance-related information between employer and employee. Blanchard and Johnson, authors of The One Minute Manager, tell us: "Management is something you do **with** your people, not **to** your people." A continuous constructive interchange of information is essential for the process to work effectively.

The Performance Management Process

For performance management to work effectively, direction must come from management staff. An effectively led organization has a clear and established direction, which comes from a formal mission statement supported by written goals. The goals must be considered when employee performance expectations are established. When all employees work toward the organization's mission and goals, maximum workforce efficiency and productivity can be achieved.

The performance management process has three primary steps:

Step 1: Establish performance expectations for the employee.

Step 2: Provide regular coaching and feedback regarding employee performance.

Step 3: Conduct the performance appraisal interview.

Figure 1 illustrates that the first step in the performance management process, identifying performance expectations, is tied to the mission and goals of the organization. The integration of business goals with performance expectations is a key to improved employee performance and satisfaction. After performance expectations have been identified and communicated to the employee, the supervisor must follow up with the proper coaching and feedback to provide support and to ensure that the job is performed properly. The final step in the process is a performance appraisal interview usually conducted annually.

Formal and Informal Approaches to Performance Management

Not all small business managers have adopted formal, written performance management procedures. Yet most supervisors evaluate employee performance to some extent. As supervisors mature in their management skills and as the size of staff increases, supervisors

tend to replace informal management practices with more formal ones (Hornsby and Kurotko, 1990). Figure 2 contrasts informal performance management approaches with formal approaches. The long-term goal of most small business employers should be to adopt practices on the formal side of the continuum, assuming it is warranted by the size of the staff and the organizational structure.

Mission and Goals

Integrating the mission and goals of management into the performance expectations of individual employees is critical in the performance management process. Employees will be more highly motivated if they understand how their performance expectations and their work contributions relate to the success of the business. Generally, all staff members want the business to succeed; they want to be part of a winning team. The supervisor's challenge, then, is to create a winning mission and actualize it through clear goals. Once goals are set, the performance expectations of each team member should be tied to them.

Figure 1. The PERFORMANCE Management Process

Performance Management:

The daily process of working toward previously established performance expectations followed by a formal performance appraisal.

The process of sitting down to write a mission statement and goals is not enough to create a successful organization. The mission must be internalized by the supervisor and then communicated to the entire team or staff. The mission can, and should, be presented in a variety of ways, including written statements given to employees. Many supervisors include the mission statement in their policy handbook or post the mission and goal statements on the employee bulletin board. Discussion of the business mission should take place in staff meetings and in each step of the performance management process. In addition, personal success should be linked to organizational success. For example, part of articulating the vision of the business is conveying that "when the business does well we all benefit." These benefits can come in the form of increased job satisfaction, better compensation, promotion, and individual recognition.

Establishing Performance Expectations

At least once each year, performance expectations should be conveyed to the employee in a clear and understandable way. Individual performance expectations or standards are defined as the conditions or results of satisfactory work. They should be discussed with the employee and agreed upon before the performance period begins. Performance expectations for the individual should be consistent with the mission and goals previously discussed. When creating performance expectations, managers should consider the tasks performed in the employee's position and the employee's past performance in conducting those tasks. Performance expectations should be clear and behavior-based. That is, the employee must understand the behavior or performance required to meet established expectations. In many businesses, performance

Figure 2. Formal vs. Informal Approaches to Performance Management

	Informal	**Formal**
Step 1. Performance Expectations	Verbally communicated	In writing
	Partially thought out	Well thought out
	Somewhat clear	Clearly conveyed
Step 2. Coaching and Feedback	Sporadic Process	Day to day process
	Feedback not complete	On-going feedback is both positive and negative
	Expectations not consistently met	Expectations consistently met
Step 3. Performance appraisal	No formal review	Formal review
	Little development emphasis	Development oriented
	Low employee involvement	High employee involvement

expectations are given to the employee verbally through discussions and meetings. Others believe performance expectations should be in writing and kept up to date.

Written performance expectations have several advantages. They allow the manager and employee to discuss and agree on expected performance and provide a permanent record that can be referred to at any time through the performance period. To be most effective, the establishment of performance expectations should be a two-way process where the employee has input in decisions on performance expectations. These should be based on the organizational goals and the requirements of the individual job.

Three essential components of effective performance expectations are:

1. **Measurability** - Truly result-oriented performance expectations must contain measures by which performance can be judged. Measures may include dollars, percentages, numbers of items, and ranges. By integrating measures into performance expectations, both manager and employee clearly know what level of performance is expected.

2. **Time frame** - Productivity often is determined by how quickly desired results can be achieved. The employee and the manager should be clear on exactly when results are expected.

3. **Attainability** - Performance expectations must be within the individual's and the organization's reach if they are to be an effective performance management tool. If either internal or external business constraints prevent attainability, they may demotivate–rather than motivate–the individual.

It was mentioned earlier that performance expectations should be in writing. This can be done through a frequently updated job description, if it is specific enough. A job description for the purposes of establishing performance expectations might include a general goal statement or an umbrella statement of several sentences describing the objectives of the position. The remainder of the description may include 5 - 10 specific key statements identifying the results expected in the position.

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Another way to establish more specific performance expectations is through a written set of job requirements that we refer to as a job performance guide. The job performance guide identifies the specific behaviors required to perform a job completely and correctly. Such a guide can be particularly helpful when there are a number of people doing the same job.

For example, consider the following excerpts from a job performance guide for a middle manager in a small business with emphasis on personnel management.

- At least 90 percent of all people recruited and hired master the job within one year.
- A thorough orientation program is conducted for each employee within the first two weeks.
- After a prescribed training period no employee errors occur as a result of knowledge or training deficiencies.
- Each employee works with his or her supervisor to develop a plan for ongoing training and development.

Similar job performance guides can be developed for other duties. Preparation of such information gives supervisors an opportunity to clarify jobs and goals as well as providing an excellent communication and training tool to use with employees.

Coaching and Feedback

Ongoing performance feedback is critical for employee development, growth, and productivity as well as business success. Yet this area of management can be fraught with difficulties. There are two types of feedback – positive feedback and constructive criticism. Positive feedback generally takes the form of compliments, recognition and approval for performing well on a daily basis. Constructive criticism may be viewed by the employee at times as negative feedback, but in reality it provides for corrections in job behavior at or near the time the employee is doing the job. Both of these types of feedback should be provided on an ongoing basis and in a positive way.

Let's look at some reasons why managers do not always provide positive feedback and constructive criticism as much as they could:

Reasons why managers fail to provide positive feedback:
- Managers often use the excuse that it's not necessary: "Joe already knows he's doing a good job."
- Some managers have a difficult time expressing any feelings, positive or negative, to others. As a result, they often say nothing.
- Some managers feel that praise or positive feedback will be perceived as insincere. They feel uncomfortable complimenting or praising their employees.
- It takes time. Managers who are often on the run may feel that they cannot always stop to provide positive feedback.

Reasons why managers fail to deliver constructive criticism:
- Some managers avoid uncomfortable situations with employees, hoping they will "go away." Unfortunately they tend to get worse.
- Sometimes managers think, "I don't have time to deal with that problem right now, I'll deal with it another time."
- A manager may resist giving negative feedback out of fear of being disliked by the employee.
- Sometimes managers fear the employee might resign.

The importance of both positive performance feedback and constructive criticism cannot be overstated. Employees want to know where they stand, and even the best employees appreciate compliments and praise for work well done. Likewise, immediate corrective feedback is important. If it is not pro-

vided, the employee's poor performance will be repeated and reinforced, making it more difficult to correct in the future. Providing constructive criticism becomes more comfortable when the supervisor makes it clear from the beginning of employment that both positive feedback and constructive criticism will be provided to ensure that both employee and management goals are met. This way, the employee comes to view constructive criticism as a part of the job rather than a personal attack.

Performance management as defined earlier suggests a process of working toward established performance expectations. Periodically, the manager and the employee should review the employee's performance. If it is satisfactory, praise and acknowledgment of success is appropriate to reinforce good work behavior. Many managers admit they don't provide positive feedback often enough. Authors of <u>The One Minute Manager</u> encourage supervisors to "catch your employees doing something right."

Conversely, if improvement is needed, the manager should not hesitate to immediately discuss the areas of difficulty and coach the employee on ways to improve performance. Employee involvement in developing strategies for improved performance is also important.

Conducting a Performance Appraisal

At its best, a performance appraisal is a developmental tool. It is an opportunity for the manager and the employee to meet and discuss performance results. Then, using those results, they can plan for the employee's growth and development in the future. At its worst, a performance appraisal interview can be a negative experience for both the employer and the employee, fraught with confrontation and criticism and mired in mistakes of the past rather than exploring opportunities for the future.

Performance evaluation should be kept simple. The purpose of the appraisal is to provide clear, useful information to employees about their performance-related behavior. Preparation for the performance appraisal interview is critical. Conduct the interview in a quiet place where both supervisor and employee will not be interrupted. Allow an adequate amount of time. Try to create as positive an atmosphere as possible and speak in positive terms during the appraisal. Before the interview, gather any written information regarding the employee's performance over the past year, and any performance expectations written at the start of the performance period.

This information should be reviewed and highlighted in the interview. If much of it has not been put in writing, the supervisor should make notes, both positive and negative, of past performance, remembering that there should be no surprises. The supervisor should also remember that the employee's tolerance for constructive criticism is limited. It is important to select only one or two areas where improvement is most needed. Avoid being too easy or too tough-minded. Be fair and honest.

To structure the performance review process and ensure that the interview is conducted completely and thoroughly, follow these steps:

1. **Explain the purpose of the discussion and the procedures that the discussion will follow**. For example, a manager might begin by indicating that the purpose of the discussion is to review the employee's performance over the past year. The beginning of the discussion may be a review of the previous performance standards, followed by a comparison of actual performance with those standards.

2. **Elicit the subordinate's ideas and opinions, making sure not to say**

anything that might influence or bias them. Early in the conversation, the manager should ask for the employee's own perception of performance over the past year. If the business provides a performance review form, the employee can be asked to use the form for a self-evaluation of his or her performance in the past year. Effective listening and communication skills are very important in this step.

3. **Communicate your views regarding performance during the review period.** This can be based on notes or an outline that you have written. It can also be based on a performance appraisal form. If possible, it should also be based on specific performance measures that have been observed in the past year.

4. **Discuss with the subordinate any differences between the two of you and how those differences might be resolved**. During this part of the appraisal process, the manager and the employee should openly discuss any differing perceptions and come to agreement on how to resolve any differences of opinion.

5. **Together with the subordinate, devise a plan of action for carrying out whatever has been agreed upon**. This is the goal-setting part of the process. After analyzing and discussing the past year's performance, place emphasis on setting performance expectations for the year to come, making those expectations measurable, time bounded and attainable. If the complete process cannot be carried out during the performance appraisal interview, set a separate time to finish the goal setting process for the coming performance period. End the interview by restating the positive aspects of the past year's performance and the employee's value to the business.

Use of Forms in the Appraisal Process

Large organizations with formalized personnel departments generally use forms in the performance review process. Performance appraisal rating forms provide a tool for the supervisor to conduct a complete and accurate performance appraisal. Often employees or managers may resist the use of specific forms for conducting performance appraisals. They may not like to use the forms or they may not find them helpful for the job that they are trying to evaluate. Often, a small business manager has a choice regarding whether to use a form or not. If a form is used, it should be designed in a way that the person conducting the appraisal can use it constructively and effectively. It is important, therefore, to be aware that a variety of performance appraisal forms exist. Perhaps the best approach for the small business manager is to review a variety of forms and develop one that best suits the needs of the business.

A Word of Caution About Rating Forms

While performance appraisal forms are widely used in the business world, they should be used with caution in a small business. A rating form is a fine tool for structuring the appraisal interview, and helping to quantify employee performance. However, it should not be used as a substitute for good communication and supervision. In the final analysis, the success of the performance appraisal depends more on the manager's skill and execution of the entire performance management process than on the use of a particular rating form.

Summary

Properly executed, the performance management process ensures that employees understand what their job is and how well they have been performing that job. By setting performance

expectations, providing feedback and conducting annual performance appraisals, the supervisor encourages peak performance. Performance management is not something that happens once a year. Rather, it is a planned, ongoing process of employee growth and development, based on continuing dialogue and feedback. Employee involvement in each step of the process will enhance employee motivation and help to ensure that the performance management process is effective.

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Creating Documents that Reduce Risk and Improve Productivity

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Guidelines for Evaluating Employees

The following guidelines have been prepared to help you with the evaluation of your employees. Please follow these guidelines when completing the evaluation of each employee.

1. Fill out each employee's evaluation prior to meeting with him or her.

2. Base your evaluations on performance, not personal feelings.

3. If an item on the evaluation does not apply to that person, you can leave it blank or put 'NA' for not applicable.

4. Add up the Outstandings, Satisfactories, and the Needs Improvements.
Remember that no employee is perfect and each employee has an area of improvement whether its in production, communication, etc.

5. Schedule an evaluation meeting with each employee in advance.

6. The evaluation meeting should be held in a private and quiet area. No phone calls should be accepted.

7. At the meeting, make the employee feel comfortable. Talk to the employee about what is going on in their lives.

8. After making the employee feel comfortable, go over the evaluation. You can make relevant comments and so can the employee.

9. Before the meeting ends, you should help the employee set a goal to work towards during the next six months.

10. It is essential for you to listen to the employee. Their input is very important.

11. Tell the employee that upper management will review the employee comment page.

12. After the evaluation meeting, return the completed evaluation form to the Human Resource Department. The evaluations will be filed for future reference.

Interview Guide

Compiled in this packet is information for your team to use as a guide to prepare for the Interviewing Process. You will find this information useful in preparing for your interviews, and actually conducting the interviews.

Too many people who perform interviews start out unprepared. Their haphazard and unstructured questions produce little or no real evidence on the quality of the job candidate. These interviewers say, "I can usually make my decision in the first few minutes"; "I've done this so many times, I just follow my hunches"; or "I know who I'm looking for when I talk to them."

"Hunch Hiring" gives you the same odds for hiring a productive associate as choosing the winning lottery numbers. Traditional, casual methods of interviewing nearly guarantee a "guess" will be made to fill a position. To help you with

this process you need to read the book *Interviewing: More Than A Gut Feeling*.

We all know that intuition plays a role, to some degree, in the process. Relying on intuition alone sets us up for the possibility of having our own biases and foregone conclusions (consciously or unconsciously) influence our choices. This could lead to what experts have called the "mirror effect."

The mirror effect is where interviewers select people who are most like themselves. Of course, this leads to the very real possibility of:

1. selecting an incorrect candidate for a position,
2. "same-ness" in an organization, or
3. violation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines.

The real key to effective interviewing is combining art (intuition) and science (prepared and structured design). By structuring questions that are specific to the job qualifications, you are applying measurable, objective criteria instead of relying on subjective hunches

– **Past Performance is the Best Predictor of Future Performance**.

Interviewing Process

1. Initial
   - Job Description – daily responsibilities
   - Selection Criteria – have an idea of what type of characteristics are needed for the position
   - Know the Benefits of the Job – Insurance, Uniforms, Rate of Pay, Overtime, Vacation, Holidays, Weekends
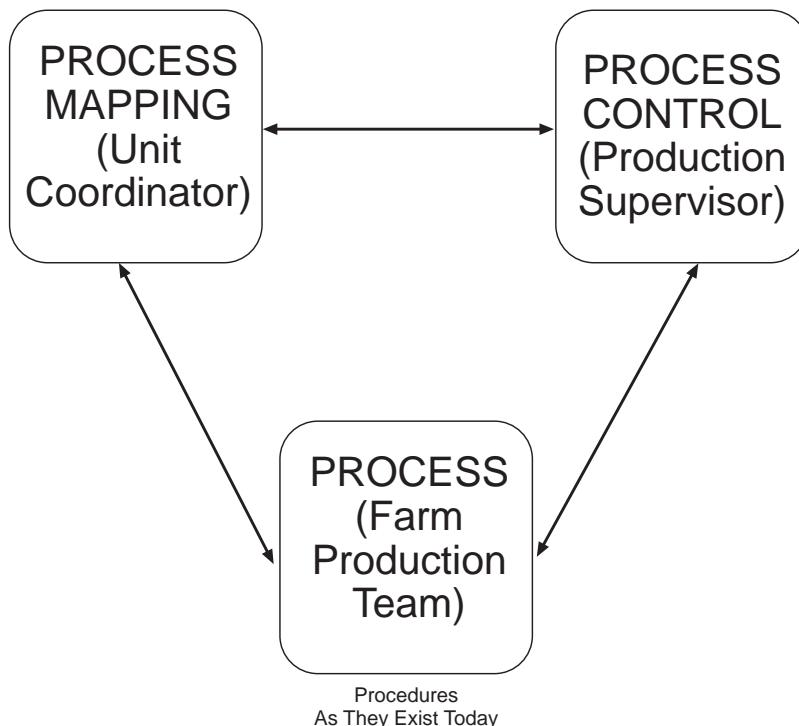
2. Announce
   - Internal Posting – inform Coordinators to post opening within the unit
   - External Posting – local newspaper advertisement

3. Applicants
   - Phone Screen
   - Resume or Application Screen
   - Set Interview Times

Assessment Tools
- Safety
- Production Procedures
- Policy
- Job Descriptions
- Smart Goals
- Bio Security
- Environmental Management

Measurement Tools
- Smart Goals
- Pig Champ
- Target Graphs
- Access Process Mapping
- Benchmarking
- Timely

PROCESS MAPPING (Unit Coordinator)

PROCESS CONTROL (Production Supervisor)

PROCESS (Farm Production Team)

Procedures As They Exist Today

4. Interview
- Preparation

  Questions – have an idea of what you are going to ask – know what you can and cannot ask
- Application Papers – Job Application and Interviewing Questions
- Testing – review application and/or resume while applicant is testing
- Interested in Applicant – get references; work and personal

5. Decision
- Narrow Your Applicants
- Conduct Reference Checks
- Call Applicant Back In
- Take to or Meet at a Farm Site
- Show and Tell Applicant All We Have to Offer

Interview Questions

Overall Assessment

Overview and Personal Characteristics Questions
- Describe the positions you have held. Your key accomplishments. Your reasons for moving from one position to the next. Your reasons for seeking a new opportunity.
- What interests you about this position?
- How do you describe yourself?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
- What factors in your past career, education, or other activities do you feel will contribute to your success?
- Tell me about one really smart decision you made in the past year. One not so smart one?

Job-Related Questions
- Tell me what you know about us.
- How large was the last organization you worked for?
- What were your highest priorities in your last job?
- If you were to get this job, in what areas could you contribute immediately? After some orientation and training?

Selling Skills Questions
- Tell me about the toughest sale you ever had and how you handled it.
- How did you fare in contests and other sales incentive programs?
- What was the volume in the territory when you took it over? What is the volume now? **Or** What was the volume when you left?
- If your largest account closed, how would you attempt to replace the business?
- If you train salesperson, what factors about your customers do you stress?

Decision-Making Questions
- Describe the steps you used in making an important decision or recommendation in the last year.
- What kinds of decisions are easiest for you? What makes them easy?
- What kinds of decisions are more difficult for you? What makes them difficult?

Commitment Questions
- Talk about a time when you made a personal sacrifice in order to reach a work objective.
- Describe a time when you were not willing to make a personal sacrifice in order to get a job done.

Employee Management for Production Agriculture

Customer Service Questions

- Describe an experience that exemplifies your understanding of Customer Satisfaction.
- Describe an experience in which a customer was upset and how handled. How do you feel about the result/solution?
- Tell me about your relationship with customers. What special problems did you face and how did you handle them?

Interpersonal Relations Questions

- Describe your method of influencing people.
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- How do you get things done?
- Tell me about the person you admire most.
- If I asked former co-workers or supervisors to describe you, what would they say?
- Of the supervisors you've had, describe the one that most impressed you.

Organization and Planning Questions

- At the end of the day when you sit back and reflect on the day, what do you consider as a "good" day?
- Sooner or later our best-laid plans don't work. Wouldn't you agree? Describe how you schedule your time on an unusually hectic day. Give a specific example.
- Describe your preparation for an interview.
- What led you to seek a position with us?

Expectation Questions

- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What are your career goals? Do you have a contingency plan?
- If you could turn a hobby into an occupation, what would you be doing? How do you know you'll be successful?

Consensus Building—Deciding How to Decide

Consensus Description:

All the group members understand the decision, can live with it, and can explain why it is best. This does not mean that everyone is completely satisfied or that it is anyone's first choice.

Consensus building requires time, active participation of all team members who have communication, listening, conflict resolution, and facilitation skills, and can think creatively with an open mind.

Rules: Certain common sense rules of conduct must be followed in order for the process to work.

- **Respectful listening** – Simply put, when a member of the group speaks everyone else listens. There are no side conversations. Everyone focuses his/her attention on the speaker.
- **Turn taking** – It is important that everyone gets their voice in the room. If the discussion is dominated by one or by a few then reaching a consensus is not possible. Everyone's voice must be heard by giving each person a turn to speak.
- **Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose** when discussion reaches stalemate. Instead, look for the next-most-acceptable alternative for all parties.
- **Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict and to reach agreement and harmony.** When agreement seems to come too quickly and easily, be suspicious, explore the reasons and be sure that everyone accepts the solution for

basically similar or complementary reasons.

- **Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision process.** Disagreements can help the group's decision because with a wide range of information and opinions, there is a greater chance the group will hit on more adequate solutions.
- **Decision-making through consensus involves discussion and accountability of viewpoints** as opposed to power struggles. Postponement of decisions to give time to reconsider and recognize that all people participating are able to accept and work with the decision is vital to the consensus process.
- **Remember that the ideal present behind consensus is empowering versus overpowering, agreement versus majorities/minorities.** The process of consensus is what you put into it as an individual and a part of the group.
- **Finally, use your minds – you've got good ones or you wouldn't be here.** So think before you speak; listen before you object. Through participating in the consensus process, one can gain insight into not only others but also one's self.

Tools for Reaching Consensus

Too often groups begin their decision process by debating various solution options. The energy in this approach is focused on trying to convince, sell, and change minds. Sometimes it works, but more often it creates win/lose situation or complete deadlock. Begin instead by asking people to explain the needs that they are trying to meet, or why they hold the position they do. What need does their idea meet or what problem does it solve for them? Sometimes you must ask why several times to get at the heart of the need.

Stage 1 – To Collect Data and Raise Awareness

Grounding – Everyone present is given a turn to answer the following two questions. Hearing everyone's responses to the questions gives the group the different perspectives of the situation and allows expression of the emotions connected with the situation. The group must recognize the emotions before progress can be made.

- What is the situation?
- How do you feel about it?

Grounding can also be reached by using the Delphi Method. The aim of the Delphi method is to combine expert opinion, by facilitating the exchange of ideas and information but enabling each participant to have an equal input by preventing bias due to position, status or dominant personalities.

The method involves a specific questionnaire; their responses are anonymous in the sense that none of the others know where each response originates from.

Responses obtained from the panel are collected by a central coordinator and fed back to the respondents in a synthesized form. The respondents are then asked for a further response allowing them to revise their initial position if they so wish. The process is then repeated. The aim of each round or iteration is to gradually produce a consensus amongst the group.

Stage 2 – Meeting – To Encourage Debate

Questions – In small groups, the following questions are answered by each member in turn. Each group has a facilitator and a recorder. The facilitator sees that turns are taken. The recorder writes on a flipchart the exact words of each speaker.

- What are the worst possible outcomes of the situation?
- What are the best possible outcomes of the situation?
- What are the beliefs/behaviors/ strategies/actions, which will foster the best possible outcomes?

Consensus Statement – After each small group has recorded and shared with the larger group their responses to the questions. Members from each small group meet and combine the responses into a consensus statement that includes all the thoughts recorded and forms the basis of a plan to address the situation.

In response to this complexity that surrounds process control, we open the floodgates to try to make sure all points of view are heard. It can be difficult and it does take time, but the outcome is worth it.

For people who can see the bigger picture, say it like dropping a stone in a lake. It begins with just one idea, spreads to many, and ultimately affects all.

Now What? Developing a Strategy for Taking it Home

Sarah L. Fogleman
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This conference isn't about hot air. It's about facts, and ideas, and inspiration. It's about knowing that the big outfits and the medium-sized outfits and the small outfits all have the same kinds of problems. It's about understanding that people issues are unlike any other issues a business will ever face. It's about knowing that you're not in it alone.

But, most importantly, this conference isn't about having a great time in Kansas City. This conference is about having an easier time once you get home.

Conferences like this are famous for pumping people up: great speakers, good food, and hours in a car to do nothing but think about how much easier things are going to be come Monday morning. But then, Monday morning comes. Equipment breaks down, people call in sick and eventually, the good intentions of the previous week are pushed aside in order to fight bigger, more dangerous, fires.

How can you keep that from happening this time? The answer is simple, but the process is difficult. Commit to a strategy for taking it home. If you do not do this, you might as well have stayed at home.

The Trip Home

So, what are you supposed to do when you walk out of the door, fasten your seatbelt and get ready to leave all your good intentions behind? Too often, participants leave the best-planned, best-run, best-received conferences and go home only to see no real impact in their operations. An economist has coordi-nated this conference; therefore, it had better give you some kind of return on your investment. But, that's the thing about events like this, they do not stand alone. This is only just beginning. Th investment kicks into high gear as soon as you walk out the door.

If you have enjoyed this conference, be prepared to let your mind race over the ideas that have come to you. Strategize. The concepts that have been planted into your head for the last two days will start to bounce around in there for a while. Let them bounce. Ask, "what if?" And don't stop to think anything through. Brainstorm. Hopefully you won't face this long trip alone and there will be someone there who can share in this brainstorming process. Think the big thoughts and dream the big dreams while you can because Monday morning will be here soon enough.

Monday Morning

It is common knowledge that exten-sion professionals spend much of their lives "preaching to the choir." Perhaps nowhere is that as evident as it is in the field of human resource management. After all, the people who need confer-ences on this subject the most are the people who cannot leave the business for two days because there is no one there whom they trust to be in charge while they are gone. It's a sad fact, but it amounts to good news for all of you who were able to attend. Congratulations. You must be doing something right, otherwise you couldn't have gotten away in the first place. But no matter how good your staff is, there will be things,

come Monday morning, that will need your immediate attention. There will be fires and you will have to put them out.

Don't get caught up in the fires. It's an easy trap—watch out for it. Human resource problems are typically easy problems to push aside. No one ever truly ignores them; they just never seem as urgent as other things. There are a few things you can do to help make sure that doesn't happen in your situation.

1. **Choose co-conspirators**
   Diet experts always sing the praises of losing weight with a buddy. The same principle applies to the concept of improving your business's human resource situation. If there are other people involved in the process, you will be there to help each other maintain your mutual focus and achieve your goals. Hopefully, at least one of your co-conspirators was able to attend the conference with you. Otherwise, choose those people as soon as you get back to work. Approach them with what you have learned and go through the process of setting goals together.

2. **Work Backwards**
   Identify the challenges that you are currently seeing in your business. Are they problems or are they symptoms? We hear them all the time, stories about men who go to the doctor for the hiccups and end up having major surgery for something that conventional wisdom has always said could be scared out of you. Human resource problems are a same way. Truly analyze the challenges that you are facing and then work backwards to the source. For example, don't try to improve an employee's motivation if his or her compensation package is using the wrong carrots (see Creative Compensation) and he or she is merely adjusting his or her work performance accordingly. In that case, you have a motivation symptom of a compensation problem.

3. **Pick Your Battles**
   There are two approaches to instigating human resource management changes:
   - Fight the fights you can win.
   - Fight the fights that need fighting.

There are small things you can do. For example, you may make the goal of making an effort to see and speak with every employee in your business every day, no matter how many fires there are to be put out that day. That's an easy one. It's a fight you can win. It may be a very important fight for you if you feel that communication is a big challenge between you and the people you work with. But there are also larger, more cumulative, types of battles. Perhaps you have decided that this year, for the first time, everyone in your business is going to go through a formal evaluation. This is never a battle a manager fights because it is easy to win. The only reason this battle ever gets fought is because it really needs fighting.

People often debate over which of these types of battles is more important. There is no cut-and-dried answer to that. You have to have little victories. Don't be like the graduate student who went to his office every day and wrote on his "to-do" list, "Write Thesis." Break the process up into chunks. Turn the big, "fight that needs fighting" into several, smaller, battles that you can win.

No one can tell you which fights to fight. That will be up to you and your co-conspirators. Whatever battles you choose to get into, know that they may not be easy. These new changes that you may be instigating might be major, like writing a new handbook and initiating performance reviews for the first time. Or, they may be minor, like trying to hold regular staff meetings. Whether

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they are large or small, the new ideas may result in a welcome change for your employees, but all change, welcome or not, can be difficult to adjust to.

Get Buy-In

The great ideas that popped into your head during the trip home may not be easy for your coworkers to understand or appreciate. People don't adjust well to changes that are dictated to them; they have to be involved in the process.

Communicate what is going to be going on. If you have long-term goals, share them with all of your employees. That way, all of those "mysterious" meetings and questions won't seem so mysterious.

Ask current employees what changes they would like to see? Then, ask their ideas on how to implement them. Don't ever let someone just tell you a problem; work with that person to outline several possible solutions as well.

Tell everyone why you are doing what you're doing. The only way for people to truly understand something is to know "why". Don't be afraid to communicate the symptoms that you have isolated and why it is you are making an effort to cure them.

Don't be Hasty

Even if a manager doesn't spend all of his or her time putting out fires, there's still a possibility that he or she might burn out. Perhaps the most common reason that great ideas don't get implemented is because of the time required to see many of these changes through. It cannot and will not be an overnight process.

Set realistic goals to be accomplished and, more importantly, set a realistic time frame in which to accomplish them. Below is an account of what some human resource management profession-

Human Resource Management Process	Length of Time
Improve Communication	Immediately
Re-write ads and develop new recruitment procedures	2 months
Develop a more accurate system for selecting employees	3 months
Initiate or revise a new employee orientation program	4 – 6 months
Develop an awareness of different personality types	4 – 6 months
Initiate a system for feedback and evaluation	6 – 12 months
Develop materials to insulate against legal risks	8 – 12 months
Develop a more favorable impression in the community	12 – 18 months
Evaluate and Implement Compensation Changes	12 – 18 months
Develop Complete Handbook	3 – 5 years

als believe to be a reasonable length of time to accomplish some common goals for agricultural businesses.

Get Help

Before you leave the conference, choose a buddy. This person is separate from your co-conspirators. This person is independent of your operation and will serve as an informal sounding board when you have had a great idea or have reached the end of your rope. Make each other set deadlines and then give each other a call when those deadlines are up.

You should never be afraid to ask for help. Certainly, this little extension event is not the end-all, be-all of human resource management education. No one ever claimed that it was. What it is, is a starting point. You will have to follow it up with more meetings, better interaction with other professionals who are dealing with the same challenges that you face, reading great books, etc. This is not the end of your human resource management education; this is the beginning.

INSIGHT

Think about what you thought you knew when this conference started. Now, think about the things you never knew, the details of the picture that were somehow blurred in the rush of your everyday activities. If there is one word that I would like to apply to the Employee Management for Production Agriculture Conference, it would be insight.

–Why is my business like it is?
–What is happening within other businesses in my industry?
–Why do my employees sometimes behave the way they do?

The speakers, sessions, and participants of this conference have hopefully helped to answer some of those questions for you. Hopefully, you have found some sort of insight into your business, your industry, your people. Now, maybe your goals can be within your sights.