

Agriculture Insights

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OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

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Finding Good Farm Employees

As farms expand and diversify, employees become an integral part of the operation. Unfortunately, most of us farmers never had any classes on how to find and hire a good employee. However, Dr. Bernie Erven, professor and extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Ohio State University, and one of the nation's leaders in farm human resources, offered some insights at the 1998 Farm Business Financial Management School.

We all know finding good workers is not negotiable. Have you ever seen a business, any business, succeed while its people failed? Without good employees, a business will never reach its peak business goals.

But luckily, there are several ways to find good employees. The first is to look within your business. Do you have someone, currently, that you could give more responsibility to build a better employee? This may require some additional training, but the end result could be a very productive person. Promoting from within is a common business practice that builds solid, loyal employees.

The second method in finding good employees is hiring someone from the general labor pool. Note that I did not say the farm labor pool. People from the general labor pool can be tremendous employees, but remember that there will be more training involved.

Also, when advertising for your farm labor position be aware of the language and content of the advertisement. Rather than, "Farm Laborer Needed. Call 555-7272" as your business advertisement; try something like "Are you looking for work in the outdoors? Do you like animals? Would you like working with your hands for a feeling of accomplishment? We may have a position for you! Flexible hours. Free training included. Call 555-7272 to find out more exciting details." Creativity in advertising can bring successful people to your farm. Remember if you wouldn't apply for the job, chances are, neither will good employees.

When preparing to hire new employees, Dr. Erven offers the following checklist for filling a position:

Determine your labor and management needs (Based on your business plan).

Develop a current job description.

Build a pool of applicants (Remember to be creative in your advertisement).

Review applications and select those to be interviewed.

Interview (Be prepared. Don't lose a good employee because you conducted a poor interview).

Check references (Look for at-

tendance history, job performance, etc.).

Make A Selection, Hire

Be careful you don't rush into a decision, and hire first employees when you don't have time to train them. Instead, develop a timeline that provides a timely response to your applicants and also fits into your business schedule. You'll both be better off. Many times farmers will hire the first person that can successfully find their farm and ring the doorbell.

Over the next few months we will be discussing strategies for building your own professional team and board of directors. Different components of these strategies include accountants, attorneys, bankers, technical support, financial planners, ag salespeople, and others. These are all people with a vested interest in your success, and creating an environment that allows them to work together can be very successful for your operation.

Feel free to send your comments and ideas to Jim Shirk at the Chamber by email, HYPERLINK mailto:jshirk@lcci.com or call him at (717) 397-3531.

Ag Issues Forum Meetings

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— In 1989, a group of agriculturists founded the Ag Issues Forum. Morning breakfast meetings are held once a month in Lancaster County on the second Thursday of each month. The Forum's mission is to "Strengthen Agriculture Through Effective Communication and Alliance Building." Since the inception of this forum in 1989, over 90 meetings have been held on a wide variety of topics, — Biotechnology, Ag Banking, Animal Rights/Welfare, Nutrient Management, Soil Conservation, and Liability issues. Speakers including Secretary of Ag., DEP and the Governor have attended. If you are interested in learning more about this forum, please contact Jenny Youngberg at (717) 859-3276 for more information.

Chester Barn Meeting Set

HONEY BROOK (Chester Co.) - A classification barn meeting sponsored by the Chester County Holstein Club is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, March 24, at 7:30 p.m., at the farm of Sam K. Stoltzfus, Honey Brook. The Stoltzfus herd presently carries a BAA of 106.9%, and will be rescored prior to the barn meeting by Holstein Association classifier, David Page.

Directions to the Stoltzfus Farm: Take route 322 east of Honey Brook, after the Turkey Hill Store, make a left turn onto Supplee Road. Go to the stop sign and turn left. The lane into the farm is the first one on the left.

All interested dairy-men are welcome.

Which corn pest do you hate more?



Corn rootworm



European corn borer

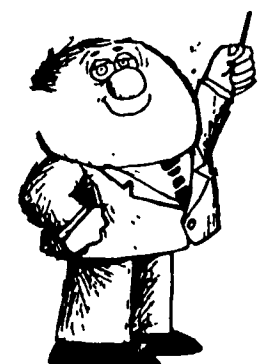
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