

Agriculture Insights

Brent Landis
Agriculture Services Coordinator



Phone: (717) 397-3531 ext. 62
E-mail: blandis@lcci.com



With Lancaster's record low 2.3% unemployment rate, workforce needs are a critical issue for most businesses, especially the agriculture industry. Some key reasons why this shortage of employees continues to challenge many businesses include: an unprecedented time of business expansion and job creation, non-traditional work arrangements and, particularly for the ag-

industry, a lack of qualified employees with job skills to work on our farms and in ag-businesses.

Recently The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry along with the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board held a Workforce Summit focused on developing solutions to the workforce crisis. One topic covered was "Employee Retention," presented by Ed

Krow, SPHR, CHCM from Human Resources Management Associates, Inc.

Krow stressed the value of good employees in your business through pointing out that replacing an employee costs on average 1-2 times the salary and benefit package. Studies show that meaningful and supportive workplaces are more closely linked to productivity than their pay and benefits. One avenue in strengthening the meaningfulness of the workplace is to increase employee involvement. Ask for your employee's ideas and suggestions for problem solving and challenge them with new jobs. Employees that feel more empowered at work are far less likely to become absent or quit. By involving them in setting performance objectives and encouraging self-evaluation of performance, you are helping to build opportunities for a sense of belonging.

Successful Employee Retention

Five key steps to building employee commitment that Krow emphasized were the following:

- 1) Recognize your employee's contribution. This may be easier for a farm or small ag-business to do than any big corporation. You have a better opportunity to gain the one-on-one interaction with just a few employees that a larger business may struggle to accomplish. Keep an accurate record of each employee's work accomplishments. Personally and publicly praise good work, but personally and privately criticize mistakes. Be sure to set objectives in your employees' day to day responsibilities. Reward employee performance with compliments and compensation.
- 2) Measure your employee's performance

compared to defined goals. Base your performance measures on objectives and clear standards. By asking your employee to rate him/herself on their job performance, you are extending the opportunity to find out where they view their performance level. Have a written record of each job incident to refer to when reviewing your employees job performance.

3) Correct performance problems. Show your employees the written performance standards prior to reviewing any problems. Provide guidance and counseling for poor performances and show examples of how their work does not meet the standards compared to others. Provide training and guidance to improve performance. Be

sure to document the times you have spoken to employees about their performance.

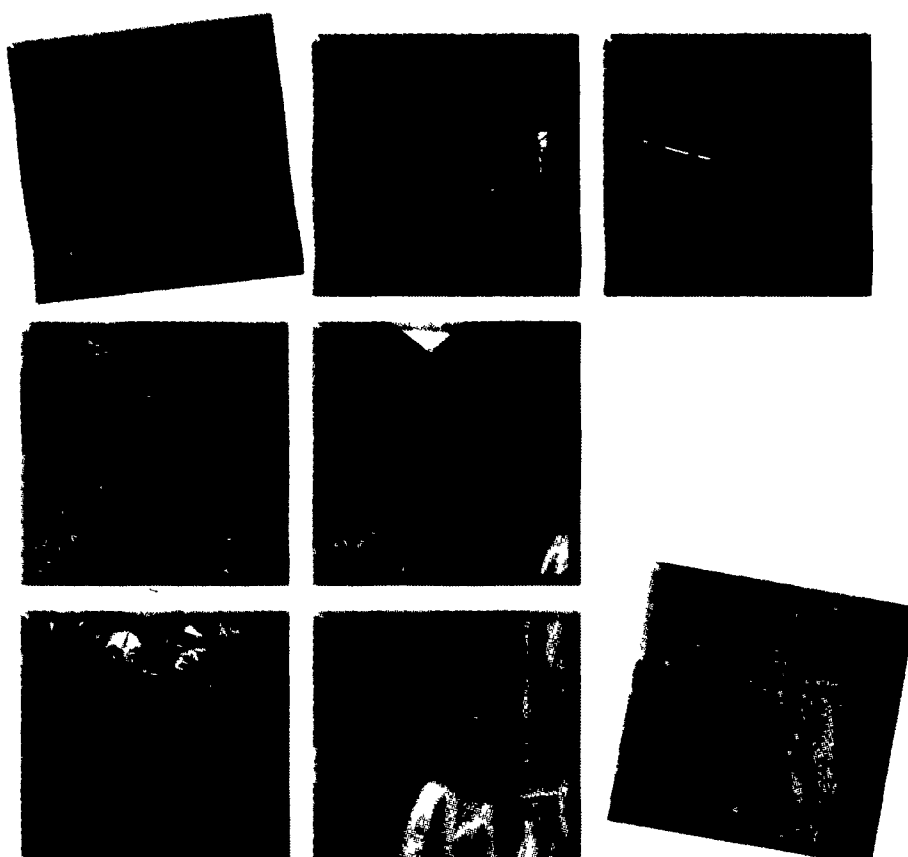
4) Set new goals with employees to improve performance. Build opportunities for job advancement within your business. Encourage employees to take responsibility for their performance and progress. Be sure to communicate regularly with employees about goals and performance.

5) Give employees what they really want: a positive work environment that fosters growth; compensation based on job performance; respect and trust for their job and abilities, benefits that support and meet personal needs, timely and fair job performance reviews and an action plan based on dealing with development needs.

If you want commitment from your employees, be sure to be committed to them! This will lead to higher levels of employee performance, greater workforce stability, a preservation of a knowledge base, customer loyalty, employee satisfaction and stronger profits.

For more information on employee retention, you may contact Ed Krow at Human Resources Management Associates, Inc. at 717-291-0851. Please send any questions or comments to Brent Landis at The Lancaster Chamber at blandis@lcci.com or 717-397-3531 ext.

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