

Human Resource Management For Small Farms

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People often say that human resource management is only for large farms. They claim that because the farm they operate doesn't hire non-family workers, they don't have to worry about managing human resources.

Industry advisors such as veterinarians, nutritionists, and extension agents sometimes claim that because their clients are mostly small farms, human resource management is not an issue for them. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there are at least three reasons why human resource management may be the most limiting factor on small farms.

Reason one: compared to businesses with large workforces each individual worker is more critical to farms with a small workforce. Consider the difference in impact between one unmotivated worker in a total workforce of fifteen compared to one unmotivated worker in a total workforce of three.

The unmotivated worker in the small workforce will have a large impact on the attitude of his two fellow workers. If he doesn't do his share, then the other two workers will need to work much harder to make up for him. In the larger workforce, the unmotivated worker is assigned a much smaller share of the total workload. If his work is poor or inadequate, there are 14 other people to pick up the slack. Also, the negative psychological impact of one poor worker in a group of fifteen is much less than in a small labor force.

Because of the potential impact of a poor quality worker, recruitment and selection are critical. As the old saying goes, "Hire hard, manage easy." In an all family situation, it is important that members feel involved and important for family reasons as well as business reasons.

Management responsibilities should be delegated so that each family member has opportunities to use their intellect to help the business rather than just their physical efforts. This will help junior family members develop their potential.

Reason two: small farms often neglect important management functions because routine chores seem more urgent. All farms must allocate limited human resources to management functions of the business in addition to routine chores. Farm employing large workforces have people whose specific role is management.

Managers may not actually perform the chores, but they make sure that adequate resources are available, and that the right chores are done in order to meet the goals of the dairy. They also monitor the

progress of the business, making sure that everything is staying on course.

Workers on small farms must perform the chores and manage.

This means they must be more diligent about setting aside time to manage. Sometimes small farms simply cannot provide management and labor to meet the needs of all aspects of the business. In those cases, small farms must find ways to secure human resources from outside the farm workforce.

Outside human resources might take the form of additional management services from the breeding company, veterinarian, feed supplier, accountant, etc. Or it might mean hiring management and labor in the form of custom crop services, heifer raising, custom dry cow care, etc.

Reason three: small farms are

handicapped by a lack of time for leadership activities. In a business, leadership means stepping back to see the big picture, determining the business's potential advantages in the market, and charting a course to benefit from the potential advantages.

Business leaders need to step away from the day-to-day activities of the farm. They need to learn about the market, the activities of other leaders, and new technologies in the industry. Large farm owners and managers sometimes devote all of their time to business leadership activities.

If small farms do not commit some of their human resources to business leadership failure is only a matter of time. Small farm managers need to honestly devote time to finding where their potential advantages lie.

This means taking time away from the farm for recreation and learning. To make this possible, small farm managers should standardize and write down work procedures and keep equipment in good repair so that temporary or part-time help can be employed.

Progressive small dairies recognize their need to manage vital human resources. They use effective recruiting practices to find and hire good workers. They develop communication and organizational skills so that family and non-family workers can join together as a team.

They adapt their businesses to take advantage of outside human resources for labor and management. Progressive small dairies use their limited human resources to seize every market advantage they can find.

Pennsylvania Young Farmers 2001 Winter Educational Institute



GREENSBURG (Westmoreland Co.) — Pennsylvania young farmer members from across the commonwealth will gather in Greensburg to discuss social and economic elements which impact their future, as well as, their concern about agriculture as a way of life.

On Feb. 6-8, the young farmers association (PYFA) will host their annual winter convention at the Four Points Sheraton in Greensburg. While here, members will conduct business meetings, attend educational workshops, recognize outstanding members in their association, tour local farms and areas

of interest, and share in fellowship with other members of the agriculture community.

The convention will kick off on Tuesday morning at 10 a.m. with the first portion of the spokesperson for agriculture contest, a media blitz to be held at the Shop-N-Save Supermarket at the Westmoreland Mall. Contestants will be judged on their interaction with consumers and members of the media while discussing agriculture issues and answering questions. The PYFA will also select one luck shopper and pay for the grocery items in their cart.

Tuesday afternoon will be spent touring the Richard Stoner and Sons dairy farm, St. Vincent Archabbey Basilica, and a gristmill and mine reclamation area.

In the afternoon the spokesperson contest will reconvene with the final portion of the

competition, a five-minute impromptu speech followed by a ten-minute question-and-answer session. The entire contest will culminate in the evening when the winner is announced at the opening banquet.

While the delegates of the convention conduct their annual business meeting on Wednesday morning, the women will be having their own program including a basket weaving demonstration, lunch at the Ligonier Country Inn, and visiting the Southern Allegheny's Museum of Arts.

After lunch, the men will participate in educational workshops on stress management,

farm safety, and will be able to obtain their pesticide license certification.

The highlight of the convention will be held on Wednesday evening at the awards banquet. Individuals who have dedicated themselves to the betterment of their farm businesses, their families, their communities, the young farmer organization, and the ag industry as a whole (will be honored for their work in the agriculture industry).

The convention will end on Thursday at the closing luncheon, which will be held after a tour of the Auen farm feedlot in Saltsburg and the Wayne and Hope Frye dairy farm.



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