

Staffing the Farm Business

Agricultural business are structured organizations that produce food and fiber. Through different prism, they are collections of people, and it matters who those people are. The employment of everyone is the result of a selection decision. But how do we decide who gets to do what?

Except perhaps for owner operators or people of their family, people do not turn up working on farms by virtue of their own unilateral decision. Farmers make choices about where to look for people to work and who to hire. Therefore and because its critical impacts, employment selection is a critical aspect of personnel management in every business. Performance of the farm organization as a whole depends on capabilities and motivations of all the people who work in it, making employee selection the most important part of personnel management.

However, performance related knowledge and skills are not evenly distributed in the workforce. People have different skills and backgrounds that translate into different levels of ability in different types of jobs. The central objective of employee recruitment and selection is to put capable people into jobs for which they are qualified and likely to do their best work most of the time.

But is there a sure-fire way to choose the right people? Not. However managers can reduce uncertainty by figuring out attitudinal qualifications that often spell the difference between weather ability possessed gets applied or not and for how long.

Expressing expectations that the candidate will do a good job and enjoy working in the business contributes to starting the relationship on a positive note.

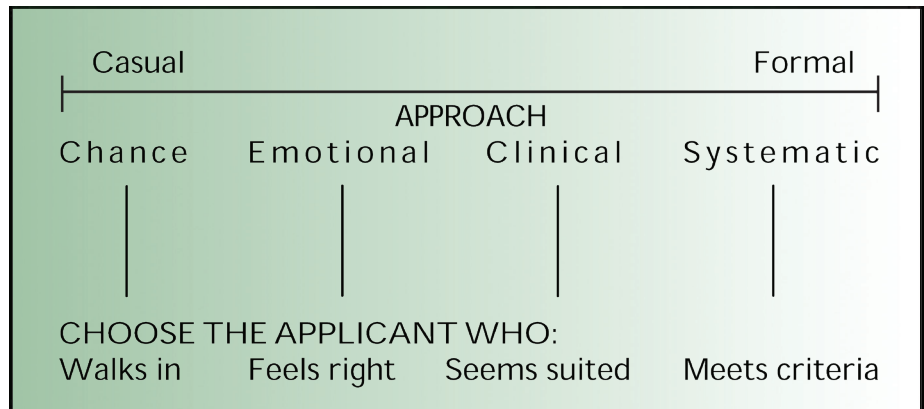
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**AG HELP
WANTED HIGHLIGHTS**

Choosing to Hire a Capable Workforce

Choosing to hire a capable workforce is a key component in the hiring process. Inconsistency between job requirements and the job description is a prime foundation for poor – as well as unsafe – performance. Work performance depends on both ability and motivation, and they are both needed for an optimal job performance. Potential employees possess a range of ability level and hence capacity for high performance. For most workers, the level of performance depends on the quality of management after selection process. Another objective of an effective selection process is to motivate people, although this purpose is more of a function of other personnel, management decision definitely helps. Additionally, from this factors, selecting with care makes sense legally and will avoid future legal problems.



The selection process has different approaches, all the way from a casual extreme where people rely upon intuition or gut to a clinical approach where the employer has some notion of what the job requires. The decision is a matter of prediction. There are several steps within the selection process; Define the objective and set a schedule to meet it, describe the job to be filled, decide who will conduct further steps, recruit potential applicants, collect applications and other expressions of interest, screen applicants and inform those not to be considered, interview candidates, test candidates, check references of top candidates, decide on first and backup choice for job offer, extend provisional offer, confirm physical condition and eligibility of employer, orient new employee to the organization and job.

Clarifying the Job Content

One of the key elements within the hiring process is clarifying the job content. Having or putting it into the form of a written job description lays a foundation for recruitment, selection, and management later on. The job description is simply a verbal sketch of a given job- its purpose, content and attributes or characteristics of the people likely to perform it well. In general, is a written description that should be simple, clean factual, with the description of the duties and qualifications, with an active verb and a list of functions in other of significance. However, there are objection against written description since they stem concerns about losing flexibility to manage, especially when technology or other conditions are changing. Understandably, managers do not want their written words to restrict their right to direct what workers do on the job or how they do it.



Recruiting is another key component of the hiring process. Word of mouth is the primary channel of recruitment, but also building a reputation of a “good place to work” will facilitate the process. Advertisement is also a common way to recruit personnel.

Assessing Applicants

Assessing applicants is the next step wit in the hiring process; in so employers need to be clear about: (1) what the job qualification are, and (2) how to get the



information about whether individuals possess them.

Employers have good reasons and the right to discriminate among workers on the basis of job-relevant knowledge, ability and skill. State and federal rules, prohibit employment discrimination based on several attributes that have no bearing on performance in most jobs.

There are common practices of assessing applicants within the hiring process:

Preliminary interview- The initial contact with a prospective employee. Misinformation or misinterpretations about the job can be minimized through good communication at this early stage.

Written Applications and Resumes- Identifies key information about the applicant such as previous employment, qualifications and skills, educations and training,

testing that distinguish a person who can actually do the job from one who talks a good game in the interview.

Interview- Most commonly used source of information in employee selection and serves as a two way communication vehicle that provides information to employer and applicant. However, and despite its widespread use, an interview is notoriously invalid and unreliable as a predictor of performance. Structuring interviews can provide solutions to practical and legal problems, providing an objective structure for the interview.



Checking references is the next step in the selection process; asking employers or supervisors about applicants can be of some use, though is usually limited.

Making and Communicating the Decision

Making and communicating a decision is the last step within the hiring process. The making of the decision, no matter what level of the job to be filled, it is a wise practice to avoid relying entirely on information from a single source. After whatever combination of paper screening, testing, interviewing and reference checking is used, decision time arrives. An offer can be made by phone or in person. If there are lingering questions about the job, description, company expectations, and conditions of employment this is time to clear them, so questions should be invited.

Once a selected applicant accepts the verbal offer, putting in terms into a letter or other written document confirms the deal and avoid misunderstandings. The written offer should include, the place of employment, the wage rate, crops and work activity, period of employment, transportation, housing and benefits provided and their cost, existence of any arrangements under the employee or contractor will received the benefits from sales to the workers and existence of any strikes of labor dispute at the place of employment. Notifying other applicants is an act of good business as well as personal courtesy.

The recruitment and selection process are the beginning of the worker orientation. Through this process employees acquire information and make their impression about how they will perform on the job. A well-planned orientation accelerates the new hire development and shortens the time to reach the productivity level desire. A complete orientation covers filling out the personnel forms, learning about job duties from the supervisor and coworkers, reviewing the company handbook, taking a look to new surroundings meeting coworkers and starting work activity.

Ag Help Wanted is a full-color, 250-page agricultural labor handbook that presents principles, practical examples, legal considerations, and offers additional references in six chapters: Roles and Responsibilities of an Agricultural Employer; Organizational Planning; Staffing the Farm Business; Supervising Agricultural Work; Managing Employee Performance, and Communication and Problem Solving. The text is designed for use in a variety of ways. It can serve as a reference to help cope with problems that arise, a source of ideas for improving management policies or practices, and a base for systematic study of human resource management in agriculture.

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