



Respect Plus Open Communication Makes a Winning Combination

Chilcott Dairy has a worker turnover rate that is the envy of any operation. Yet Chilcott, located on the rural-urban fringe of Mesa, Arizona, manages to keep wages reasonable for both the business and employees. This medium-sized farm retains most of its young stock for replacements and marketing. It purchases all of its feed from local farmers and sells its milk to the local milk association. Currently, the dairy employs five full-time individuals, one seasonal relief worker, and one quarter-time bookkeeper. The dairy has been family-owned and operated since 1958. Early in the operation, the Chilcott family developed strong ties with two families whose members were employed in the operation. An enduring mutual respect between the Chilcott family and these workers' families has emerged.

This relationship has been instrumental to the low employee turnover rate on the farm. Over the years, the dairy's key employees have been members of one of the two families or a personal referral from one of them. Along the way, the dairy has provided a stable working environment with opportunities for growth. Due to guidance from the manager and training from the senior workers, one individual opened his own dairy and three others acquired key management positions on larger dairies in the local area. As the family relationships have grown, the reputation of the dairy as a great place to work has also spread, resulting in the elimination of job vacancies and the need for advertising. This "controlled turnover" allows the dairy to focus on production and marketing and to integrate new employees without missing a step.

Although other higher paying job opportunities exist in construction, service industries, and neighboring, larger dairies, the Chilcott Dairy has never been faced with a labor shortage or salary increase pressures. Salaries are only part of the equation; creating a safe, comfortable working environment is equally important.

The family attributes the dairy's success to the fact that there is honest and open two-way communication between all workers on the farm from top to bottom, and when an opening does become available, the two key employees do the hiring. The dairy's greatest assets are its employees, and they are treated with respect and trust.

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