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Personnel Management

# Recruiting and Retaining Good Personnel

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The key to good business operations is "good people." Without efficient, company-minded, capable and willing-to-work people, we have no business. As a matter of fact, there are no business failures — just people failures!

This publication presents some ideas on how to create "good people" by improving employee relations. A quotation from Theodore Roosevelt on his thoughts regarding employee-employer relations may be relevant:

The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.

The quote reinforces the idea that the first part of an executive's job is to recruit and/or select **good** people. Thus, the first part of this publication discusses the "how to" of selecting good people for employment.

The second part of Mr. Roosevelt's statement deals with the relationship of the employee and the employer while the employee is performing his tasks. Mr. Roosevelt suggests that the employer should not become involved directly with the employee while he is performing his tasks. To attain this relationship involves the second and third parts of an executive's job in personnel administration — that of training employees properly and motivating employees so that they will want to perform their tasks acceptably. These two areas — training and motivating — comprise the last two sections of this publication.

## Selection

Hiring an employee is a major investment. If a new employee is hired at \$200 per week, you will have spent at least \$200,000 for his services in just 10 years. Hence, employee selection is an important decision which commands serious consideration.

Before starting to look for a new employee, do a little planning. Consider asking the following questions:

- **Do you really need a new employee?** Can you rearrange the responsibilities of present employees and perhaps gain more work and less pay? Many managers simply hire additional employees when expanding their operation rather than looking for new ways to do the job. Always investigate yourself to see if a need exists — don't just ask someone else. Finally, try to anticipate new needs so that you can plan ahead and not be at the mercy of walk-in applicants.
- **What will be the specific duties of the anticipated employee?** Analyze the job and prepare a "job description." This will allow an applicant to know exactly what he has to do, and the description will let you match an applicant's experience to the job.
- **What qualifications will be needed?** Based upon the "job description," prepare a "job specification" stating the various skills (physical, educational, experience, etc.) required. Keep in mind that some skills are hard to find, so you will have to decide the level of skill for which you will settle. Also, keep in mind that it is not always best to hire



the most efficient person. Hiring such a person may prove too costly, and the job may not be sufficiently challenging to hold the employee's interest.

- **What personal characteristics are desired?** Think of the type of person you want relative to your public image and what kind of person will be most compatible with the rest of your employees.

- **How much is the job worth?** Determine how much you can afford to pay for this job, and then be willing to pay it for the right person.

## Hiring

Now that you know what you want, you can begin the hiring process. The following suggestions should help you in the hiring process:

- **Use an application form.** Screening applications can eliminate some applicants and make personal interviews unnecessary. Applications also give permanent data sheets for future reference.

- **Hold a personal interview in a private area.** Never ask personal questions in front of others. Don't hurry the interview. Let the applicant talk about himself and his work experience. Ask specific questions: what did he do on his last job? How did he do it? Why was it done?

Interviews should take between 15 minutes and an hour, depending upon the level of job you are trying to fill. When the interview is over, note your reaction on the application and put it aside until all applicants are reviewed. Whenever possible, have the applicant interviewed by at least one other person — check your reactions with any others who helped interview. Finally, be sure to check all references and verify information received from the applicant.

- **Establish a physical examination as the final step in the hiring procedure.**

## Orientation

After the applicant is hired, he must be properly introduced to the firm and to his job. First impressions have a very important effect upon a worker's attitude. The following are suggestions on how you might conduct an orientation session with new employees:

- Welcome the employee to the company, and tell him that you feel he will make a good employee for your firm.

- Ask him if he would like to know why you hired him — tell him that he fits the job, appears to be dependable and that he was hired not to give him a job but to give you a dependable person.

- Tell him it will be easy to work for you — you only have three rules:

1. **Dependable** — You want him to be at work. Tell him that he will always find you reasonable when he has a justifiable request to be absent. He doesn't have to lie to you, and you won't lie to him.
2. **Safety** — Tell him you have a personal obligation to his family, and although it may seem as though you are tough at times, it is because of this obligation. Tell him never to operate an unsafe machine — come and tell you right away.
3. **Do the job right** — Tell him that your product has to meet specifications or you can't sell it. If you can't sell the product, there will be no job for him. Tell him you are going to show him the easiest and best way to do the job and that you want him to do it your way first. If he finds a better way later, let you know. Also, tell him that if he makes a mistake not to be afraid to tell you. You want it to be easy for him to talk to you.

- Discuss general rules such as time to come to work, clothes to wear, where to park car, etc.

- Tell him about the particular function of this department in the overall operation of the firm.

- Discuss how you are going to train him — that the supervisor will explain the job and work with him.

- Give him any company handbook or materials, repeat your name, rewelcome him and let him go to work.

## Training

After you have hired and oriented the new employee, the second phase of your job begins — training the employee so that he will perform his new job correctly, quickly, efficiently and conscientiously. Good training can save you up to 10 times a new employee's salary. The following are suggestions on how to conduct the job training function:

- **Prepare the worker.** Put him at ease by introducing him to his co-workers, showing him the layout of the plant and explaining the operation and where he fits in. Fully describe the job to the employee and find out what he already knows about it. Get him interested in learning the job.

- **Instruct the worker.** Use this process to help you do an effective job of instructing:

1. **Tell him what to do.** Limitations are that most people cannot "get it" through a word description. If possible, have the job broken down into specific steps.
2. **Show him what to do.** The worker does not always know what to watch for, and if there are



many motions, it is too hard to copy all of them. Even if the worker can copy the motions, he may never understand what he is doing.

3. **Have him do the job.** Have him do the job and explain the job as he does it. Correct his mistakes and have him continue until you know he knows. Encourage questions.
4. **Follow up.** Let him go on his own. Tell him where he should go for help. Then check frequently with a tapering off of the close follow-up.

## Motivation

After you have trained the employee properly, you need to insure continued performance at or near the employee's maximum level of ability. Stated differently, you need to motivate the employee so that he will give you his best.

Usually, people will not enthusiastically strive for goals that other people put before them unless they accept them as being worthwhile and important. The secret, then, of motivating people is finding out what their personal goals are — the ones important to them. To do this, you must learn what motivates an employee. Learn his goals, interests, hobbies and what he deems important — these will be your clues as to how best to motivate him.

Let's take a look at some of the goals, or more specifically, some of the wants of employees relative to the place and environment in which they work.

- **Employees want an opportunity to learn, develop and use their skills and knowledge.** Employees want to use their highest abilities and enjoy a sense of accomplishment on their jobs. And, they want to achieve things of which they can be proud.

- **Employees want to be informed.** They want to know the why of their jobs. And, they want to know what's going on in the firm — contemplated changes, general outlook, etc. (sudden changes should normally be avoided).

- **Employees desire job status.** Employees want to feel they're needed, that they play an important part in the operations of the firm and that they belong. They also want freedom of expression — including the ability to make suggestions and complaints with assurance that these will be considered fully and promptly. Also, employees appreciate titles.

- **Employees want to be recognized as individuals.** They want credit for work accomplished when they deserve it, and they want to be told how

they are doing. People do not want to be humiliated by being corrected in front of others, and they want understanding of their problems both on and off the job. This includes consideration of their family. Whether we like it or not, people bring their family problems to work with them.

- **Employees want security.** They want adequate pay and fair treatment in comparison with others. They also want fringe benefits including holidays, vacations, pension, overtime policy, rest periods and sick leave. Make sure employees know what their benefits are. Also, employees rely on the company for the future. They like steady work and reasonable hours.

- **Employees prefer competent employers.** They want supervisors or managers who know what they are doing, and they want dependable and consistent supervision. They like equal treatment (no favoritism), clear directions and an outline of what is expected of them.

- **Employees desire good working conditions.** Remember, workers spend about one-third of their days and more than one-half their waking hours on the job each work day. They want safe and pleasant conditions and good facilities.

- **Employees want good co-workers.** They want co-workers who carry their part of the work and who are agreeable and pleasant.

Surveys of employees' wants point out that, if a fair wage is paid, these factors are more important to employees than money: *recognition, good working conditions, good administration, pride in job and company and security.*

What can you do to provide for the wants of employees?

1. Do a thorough job of selecting employees that will "fit" in with the company.
2. Provide good job instruction.
3. Treat employees as individuals — help on personal problems — know your employees.
4. Keep employees informed of both their progress and company plans where possible.
5. Show no favoritism.
6. Teach supervisors (or yourself) how to "listen."
7. Recognize work — praise good work and correct poor work — be firm — reprimand in private — praise in public.
8. Provide for good communication between management and workers, particularly upward. Let them know your door is open!
9. Be truthful.
10. Be willing to improve working conditions.



## Summary

The key to good business operations is efficient, company-minded and willing-to-work people. You don't just happen upon personnel with these characteristics, you must create them. The creation process begins with organized, planned interviewing and a good selection process for new employees. After employment, new employees must be properly oriented and adequately trained for the efficient and sufficient performance of their assigned duties.

Finally, you need to insure continued performance at or near the employees' maximum level of ability by properly motivating them.

To do all of this, you must find out what the personal goals and/or wants are of the employees and then design your program to provide for these wants. If you are successful in all of these phases, you will have "good people" and consequently a successful operation. Remember, management is "getting things done through people."

This College of Agriculture publication is one in a series on personnel management. Other titles in the series that may be helpful to agribusiness managers are:

- CIS 610 Effective Personnel Leadership..... 10 cents
- CIS 612 Management Succession ..... 10 cents
- CIS 613 Problem Employees ..... 5 cents

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