

RECRUITING AND TRAINING EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The pig production industry is experiencing changes in employment trends. As operations expand, the need for employees grows as well. The objective of this presentation is to document some of the essential recruiting and initial training measures. These measures we have adopted at our farm, and now we are able to put together a better team that is meeting all production targets of the company.

INTRODUCTION

Collins, 2001 described that *"those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any company is not market or technology or competition or products. It is one thing above all others: The ability to get and keep enough of the right people."*

Human resource management in the swine industry has become a big issue. In large production systems, employees want the same things as employees in other industries - a good work environment, competitive wages, respect to feel valued, and fair rewards for work performance.

So, finding, recruiting and keeping the best employees on a hog farm is now the key for success.

RECRUITING

In his analysis of the characteristics that differentiated a select group of top performing Fortune 500 companies from their contemporaries, Collins (2001) described that there were two steps relating to personnel management that were critical to their success:

1. Getting the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus.
2. Keeping the right people on the bus and on the right seat.

Before starting to recruit employees, employers have to follow and respect some rules in the process (Dial, 2001).

Setting the Company Goals

Companies have to set their own business goals. A business goal can be to target all parameters of production needed to make a profit; for example, served/week, conception failure, 4 and 8 weeks failure rate, preweaning mortality, pigs weaned, and production costs. Also employees have to understand and believe the philosophy and culture of their employer.

Companies also have to set criteria for a new employee they are looking for.

New technician - Criteria to be hired :

- Has a positive attitude
- Is prepared to learn
- Is flexible with hours of work
- Is prepared to work with anyone
- Is prepared to put in the time it takes to ensure the animals are looked after
- Wants to work with pigs
- Be faster, stronger and smarter

How to Find People who are Looking for Work

Before hiring good people you must target all the resources in your surroundings that are working with unemployed people. They work for you and for them without cost. Each municipality has an employment organization for immigrants (NCIC - New Canadian Immigrant Center), for unemployed people (PERC - Peterborough Employment Resource Centre) or a school of agriculture like Kemptville College or Alfred College. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) has a national network that also works with employers. Also, your own company network like cooperative shopping group, grain supplier and veterinarian might have advice about your needs. If you have some budget, many human resource consultants could help you find a good worker also.

SELECTION PROCESS

This step is very important when you receive many resume and need to decide which one is the best. So it is important before you invite them for an interview to determine your criteria to hire the best person (Table 1). Criteria adopted by us on our farm looks for someone with a good attitude, quicker, stronger, and smarter.

During interviews you must ask questions about each criteria and assign points from 1 to 5 for each answer. The best way to do a good evaluation is to involve a senior employee on your farm who will make note of the answers and assigns a point score. Do not forget to ask questions about personal life such as about their family, children and social participation in the community. This will provide you with a fair idea if he or she will be a good team worker or if they have personal problems. Ask about other abilities as well - this could help you to

determine if they have other skills that will be useful in your operation, such as for maintenance help or truck driving for example.

Table 1. Farm worker selection 2006-2007.

Name	Hard worker	Loves animals	Jobs and references	Where Info **	Ability Test	Car Trans.	Open	Total
James	5	4	5	PERC	4	5	5	28
Lawrence	5	4	5	PERC	5	5	5	29
Jackie	3	4	4	Ken	3	2	5	21
Isaac *				Carole				0
Fred //				PERC				0
Barry %	5	4		NCCI	4	4	5	22
Hassan \$	3	4		NCCI	3	5	5	20
Helena	3	4		NCCI	3	3	5	18
and	3	4		NCCI	3	5	5	20
Jorge								
Gladys	3	4		NCCI	4	2	5	18
Keith \$	5	5	4	PERC	5	5	5	29
Kandel%	4	5	5	Carole	5	0	5	24
James %	4	5	5	HRSDC	4	5	4	27

* Cancelled his appointment twice

// Resume not accepted

% Engaged after interview and farm visit

\$ Good interview, invited to visit farm and after visit refused to work with us

** PERC (Peterborough Employment Resource Centre)

NCCI (New Canadian Centre Immigrant Services)

HRSDC (Human Resources and Social Development Canada)

After the interview, ask the applicant for a writing sample. Ask him to express his interest in working for you for example. In this way you can evaluate his writing skills and his real interest in the position. It is very important to ask for references and to call each of them.

Before making a decision, visit the farm and note any questions. If he or she is ready to work in this industry, you can validate the work they have done; otherwise, you can validate their interest. After visiting the farm do not immediately make a decision. Discuss with the senior employee involved in the process about their evaluation points and their feelings about the potential employee. Check the references given.

Local workers are often difficult to find and that is why many employers look outside the area and even the country. In our farm in Peterborough we hire many foreign workers. Now we have someone from India, Népal, El Salvador and Barbados and two pre-authorizations for other worker are in the process with Philipinos. This requires many forms to be filled out and

long delays before arrival but assistance is available through HRSDC with their foreign worker program.

TRAINING

Now you have a good person in the bus. The next step after hiring is to discuss a clear job description or the expectations of the company about this position.

The first few days of employment set the perspective and the tempo that the new employee carries forward. Pay attention to their needs - failure to provide adequate supervision suggests to a new employee that the company does not care about them. Training costs a lot to the company and we have to build a good system to achieve success. During this time you have to explain to a new employee all benefit plans, probation time, bonus program and evaluation schedule.

Employers have to set all expectations or job descriptions for different level positions in the business. Level 1 basically will be for a new employee with no experience. Also you have to set a list of tasks a new employee is expected to handle and learn for the first 3 months probation period.

When you make this exercise you have to be fair and honest :

- Fair: Make the job expectations interesting and motivating (not only dirty tasks for a new arrival).
- Honest: You have to make sure that new arrivals can achieve all expectations before or at the end of the probation period.

New employees have to be informed of the different level positions you have on your farm. For the employer and the trainer, skills and attitudes are very important for a good training program.

A Good Training Program Must Be:

Practical and informative. New employees have to understand the company goals and the importance of team work. They have to learn to do tasks by seeing HOW a senior employee does them. We have to explain WHY we use these protocols. In Sunwold Farm, we have a SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) manual to be clear. So we have to keep old and new employees on the same track for the same job. Before we start training we must be sure that old employees respect and follow SOP. So, in case you hire a new arrival with experience this one will have to learn and understand your protocols and your SOP.

Theoretical. It is time for building skills. We have to find time to explain to the new employee all aspects of animal function (nutrition, physiology, endocrine, reproductive). To make a profit with an animal we have to explain all the knowledge we have and use it in a better way. We have to be patient to explain WHY it is important.

The training program is for all your staff. Manage the top of your staff. It is not enough to hire the right people in the bus, you have to create the right kind of environment for them to be successful. This requires, in part, that people be put in the right seat on your bus.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION ISSUES

Job Satisfaction

As employers we have to:

- Treat all employees with respect
- Say thank you to the team or an employee for doing a good job (it is motivating)
- Plan some workout activities to strengthen the team
- On a regular basis have a production meeting with your staff to explain what is going on with production
- On a regular basis have a good meeting with your team to explain the pork industry situation
- Make sure that your employees understand the challenges and the opportunities are open for everyone

CONCLUSIONS

Swine production is not the same as twenty years ago. We are very developed now and we have to keep in touch with animal research around the world by understanding all aspects of animals (building skills) to make a better profit. Having and keeping the best employees in your business is the key for this success. Create a good work environment for your employees and motivate them. Challenge the top and ask their inputs in the business goals. Schedule the workout activities for your team to strengthen the team spirit. Large production systems is no longer a local business but a world market.

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