FIRST FRESHENERS: FINDING NEW TEAM MEMBERS AND GETTING THEM OFF TO A GOOD START

Melissa O’Rourke  B.S., M.A., J.D.
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION AND OUTREACH
Attorney -and- Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist
ISU Extension Dairy Team Member
www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm
morourke@iastate.edu  563-382-2949
@MelissaISU

Topics – Highlights:

- Importance of job analysis and descriptions
- Recruitment and selection considerations
- Orientation and onboarding
Top challenges on the dairy?

- Difficulty of hiring and retaining qualified employees.

Dairy Farm Challenge:

- Increasing cost of labor.
- Second greatest expense – just behind feed expense.
Dairy Farm Challenge:

- Increased labor productivity = Increased cow productivity.

Before hiring . . .

- Consider labor needs.
- Analyze jobs on the farm and how they fit together.
- Write good job descriptions—and let these guide the hiring processes.
Dairy Job Analysis

• Gather information about duties, responsibilities and context in which jobs are performed on the dairy.

Key Job Analysis Inquiries:

• Identify all positions, including owner & manager tasks
• List every task, from most minor to major and complex
• Include length of time required plus frequency
• List equipment, tools required
• Conduct individual or small group interviews
Assemble Job Descriptions based on Job Analysis - Why?

• Job descriptions help workers know what is expected of them.
• Job descriptions serve as a fundamental basis for employee communication and development.
• Key to effective recruitment, selection and onboarding.

Job Descriptions—Elements:

• Job title and overall summary of major responsibilities
• Qualifications: knowledge, education, experience necessary
• List all tasks—from most- to least-frequently performed
• Relationships
• Conditions
Job Descriptions: Recruitment, hiring, selection

- More likely to recruit appropriate applicants.
- Essential aid in interviewing and selection process.
- Keeps interviewer “on-task” – reviewing necessary qualifications and duties of the position with applicants, asking about training and past experience.
- Communicates requirements with potential employees.

Job Descriptions: Training and Employee Development

- Basis for understanding past experience and future training needs.
- As experienced employees move into advanced work, employers can continue positive training and employee development experiences.
- Increases employee satisfaction and productivity.
Recruitment: Best source for new employees (applicants)?

- Current employees.
- Research: Up to 45-50% of new employees are recommended by current employees.
- Many offer the current (referring) employee a bonus if (for example) the new employee remains successfully employed for 6 months.

Other recruitment sources?

- Word-of-mouth
- High school ag programs; 4H & FFA
- Area technical and community college programs
- University dairy & animal science programs.
- On-line, social media
Interview questions?

• Using the job description as a guide ensures that questions are related to a BFOQ (bona fide occupational qualification).
• Assumes well-written job descriptions!
• BFOQ = a quality or attribute reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the business or occupation.

Interview Process – Questions:

• Consider regular screening interviews even without an immediate opening
• Ask about challenges applicant faced in prior employment
• Ask questions designed to learn about how to get along with co-workers
Challenge to Dairy Labor Productivity?

- **Turnover** is the single factor with the most significant impact on dairy labor productivity.

Costs of Turnover?

Losses measured in multiple categories:

- Productivity
- Recruitment
- Selection, hiring
- Safety issues
- Investment in orientation and training
**Turnover rates?**

- Employee turnover = # of employees leaving divided by the average total number of employees, multiplied by 100 (to arrive at a percentage value).

**Turnover Cost Calculations:**

- Estimates are 150 to 250 percent of an employee's annual wage.
- Employee making $10-12/hour
- Turnover cost = $37,500 to $45,000 at 150%
Example:

- Dairy with 20 employees and 10% turnover ...
- Cost = $75,000 to $90,000 per year.

Reasons for Turnover?

- Research = Exit interviews and follow-up surveys
- Top reasons:
  - Compensation and benefits top the list
  - Working conditions
  - Lack of time off
How accurate are these reasons?

All dairy producers should give due attention to working conditions, communication, employee motivation – to retain workers.

But when do employees make a decision to leave?

- Research: 90% of employees make their stay-or-go decision within the first six months.
Onboarding and Orientation – what do these terms mean?

- Often used interchangeably
- **Onboarding** = broad process of building new worker engagement – from first contact to commitment
- **Orientation** = early stage of onboarding
What activities do orientation or onboarding include?

Is this enough to ensure the new employee is making that early decision to stay at the dairy?

Recruitment and Hiring?

Significant investment in the processes of recruitment, interviewing, reference checks, evaluation, selection --
Without a good start on Day One . . .

. . . all those hiring efforts can quickly go “down the drain.”

What difference does effective Onboarding really make?

• They were hired to do a job – just get them working and productive as quickly as possible – right?

Research says otherwise:
**Orientation Group A:**

- Senior Leader and a lead worker spent 15 minutes talking about why this is a great place to work.
- New employees spent 15 minutes writing answers to questions such as, "What did you hear about our Company today that you would be proud to tell your family about?"
- They discussed their answers.
- New employees received fleece sweatshirts embroidered with the company name, along with a badge. They were asked to wear them throughout training.

**Orientation Group B:**

- Senior leader spent 15 minutes discussing ways in which “working here will enable you to express your individuality.”
- New employees ranked individual strengths they would exhibit if stranded on a life raft at sea; spent time discussing /considering how their responses might differ from colleagues.
- New employees answered questions about individual strengths such as, "What is unique about you that leads to your happiest times & best performance at work?" - then spent time discussing and sharing this.
- New employees were given fleece sweatshirts embroidered with their individual names, along with a name badge. They were asked to wear them throughout training.
Seven Months Later . . .

- Turnover rate in Group A was 47.2% higher than that of Group B.
- Group B earned higher customer satisfaction scores during the seven months than those in Group A.

What difference could it make to the cows? - to the KPIs on the dairy? Productivity?

What Four Questions do Millennials* ask after the First Day on the Job?

- Why did they hire me for this job?
- Will I enjoy working here?
- Are any of my coworkers friend material?
- Who can I talk to about . . .?

*18 to 33 years old, born 1981–1996
**Onboarding Starts Early:**

**Establish the Start Date**

When the employment offer has been accepted, a start date should be agreed upon as soon as possible.

**Before that start date . . .**

**Inform** the new employee of what will happen on the first day of work.
Clearly Communicate:

What time they are expected to arrive – plus other basics!

It may seem fundamental to the producer –– but, focus on the new worker.

► Reduce nervousness, apprehension.
► New employees have common questions.
► Provide a “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) document by regular mail and/or email or in-person.
What should I wear?

• Many new employees do not have farm background, need guidance.
• Footwear, gloves, other appropriate attire.
• Biosecurity guidelines – some items may be provided.

⇒ Inform new worker that they will be trained on biosecurity procedures.

Lunch, snacks, beverages?

• Noon or evening meal provided?
• Snacks, beverages?
• Go to town for lunch?
• Inform the new employee of farm practices and what they should/may bring to work.
• "Welcome" lunch?
Vehicles and Parking

- Vehicle required for job?—should have been communicated during the pre-employment process.
- Where do I park?
- Areas reserved for visitors, vendors, family?
- Employee of the month?

What documents should I bring?

- Documents needed for new employee forms – as required by the jurisdiction.
What else should I bring (or not bring) to work?

- **Cellphone?**
- **Other electronic devices?**
- **Tobacco-free workplace?**
- **Weapons?**

What will I do on my first day?

- **First day(s) or week**
- **Clearly communicate work hours, break policies**
- **General outline of initial orientation/training.**
- **Decreases apprehension or confusion**
- **Helps to prepare worker for planned orientation program as well as initial training.**
The First Day

- Greet & Welcome Promptly
- Introductions – with connections
- Nametags, list, organizational chart
- Restrooms, break areas
- Key supervisor, mentor, partner
- Safety, biosecurity? New employee accompanied by a trained person.

Who is on the Orientation Team?

- Consistency: Have the same person(s) conduct orientation.
- Identify supervisors or more experienced co-workers to participate in the process.
- Assign key Mentor(s)
- All orientation team members should share a positive attitude.
- Constructive, upbeat messages geared toward positive, early impressions.
Name Tags—Employee Badges

- Consider laminated clip-on photo ID badges for owners & employees.
- ID fosters worker socialization
- Farm security and biosecurity protocols are enhanced

Shirts—Uniforms or other printed wear?

- Identifies employees
- Pride
- Farm publicity!
At the end of the first day . . .

- Any questions?
- Offer assurances.
- Offer information, reminders about the days to come.
- Ask: Good answers to those 4 Questions?

Are there good answers to those Four Questions?

- Why did they hire me for this job?
- Will I enjoy working here?
- Are any of my coworkers friend material?
- Who can I talk to about . . . ?
After Day One: Do you have an Orientation program in place?

- Enhances socialization, reduces natural anxiety.
- **Research**: Orientation results in an employee who develops and maintains a positive attitude toward the employer.

- Positive attitude = earlier & higher productivity, longer retention, less turnover.
- Less stress = better concentration, learning, absorbing substantive information about job tasks

Planning & Content of Orientation Program

- Planning may seem overwhelming, but resources are available.
- **Ask current employees for input.**
- “What do you wish you had been told when you first started working here?”
- “What do you view as important information for newcomers?”
Job Descriptions

- Orientation: Use job description as a guideline for discussion.
- Discuss tasks including future training.
- Emphasize basic safety & importance of ongoing safety training, awareness.
- Discuss relationship and importance of position to other jobs & functions on the farm.

Onboarding & Orientation: From Day One

- Well-planned program requires time & effort.
- Sets the tone for a positive employment relationship.
- Employees treated with respect have greater job satisfaction.
- Translates into productive, long-term employees – good for the farm, good for the cows!
THANK-YOU!
PLEASE feel free to contact me with any questions.

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