

Section 7: Labor (Human Resources)



After each topic in this section there is a set of questions designed to help you examine and evaluate the human resources function of your business.

Each question is designed in a way that the correct answer should be a resounding “Yes”. If you cannot firmly answer yes to a question then some

sort of change or improvement is needed. In some cases a particular question may not apply to your farm and can be skipped.

1. Job Design Assessment

Job design is the process of allocating work-related tasks and authority to the people who do the work. Job descriptions describe the work to be done and are important for two reasons. First, they force you to define the job clearly, and second

they provide a specific outline of the job so employees know what is expected of them. Properly designed jobs help to create a productive and satisfied workforce. Answer the following questions:

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| a. Are jobs designed to provide job satisfaction? | Yes | No |
| b. Do both managers and employees have a clear understanding of what are the requirements of each job? | Yes | No |
| c. Are written job descriptions used? | Yes | No |
| d. Are standard operating procedures for orchard jobs written and used to ensure maximum productivity, efficiency and product quality at harvest time? | Yes | No |
| e. Are expectations of each employee for their job clearly developed and communicated? | Yes | No |

2. Attracting the Best People Assessment

For both year-round and seasonal jobs your business must attract qualified people to be successful. For harvest and other seasonal jobs people are needed on a timely basis. Procedures must be in place to attract a qualified pool of workers and then select the best from that pool. Special attention is needed for seasonal positions.

The best way to select a talented employee is to observe them and their job performance. When you identify a valued seasonal employee communicate that with him or her and take steps to have them return the following season. Answer the following questions:

For year-round positions:

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| a. Is the business attracting 2-4 well-qualified applicants for each vacant position? | Yes | No |
| b. Are you using a variety of successful recruiting methods to ensure that a qualified pool of applicants is recruited? | Yes | No |

- c. Do you use a formal interview with a written set of questions to ensure you are gathering all the information you need to make a sound decision? Yes No

For seasonal positions:

- d. Are pickers contacted in advance to ensure that there are enough pickers present to harvest the crop in a timely manner? Yes No
- e. Before the harvest season ends are the best pickers invited to return to your farm next year? Do you have contact information for each of them? Yes No
- f. Are additional orchard workers needed to serve as quality control checkers or tractor drivers? Yes No

3. Creating Motivation Assessment

Motivation is the willingness to put forth an effort in pursuit of goals based on individual wants and needs. A motivation partnership between employer and employees requires that each play a vital role. The critical role of the employee is self-motivation and a willingness to learn and grow. The challenge for employers is to recognize that

motivation comes from within the employee. Your role is to provide a work environment in which employees will be motivated and can achieve their potential. Employers do this by providing competitive wages and benefits, safe and comfortable working conditions, support, praise and recognition. Answer the following questions:

- a. Do you and your managers and supervisors create a work environment in which employees are motivated? Yes No
- b. Does the manager try to make each person's job meaningful? Yes No
- c. Is the employee self-motivated? Yes No
- d. Does each employee know why their job is important to the success of the business? Yes No
- e. Is honest recognition and feedback provided on a regular basis? Yes No

4. Managing Employee Performance Assessment

The practice of goal setting has been shown through research to increase employee productivity. To effectively manage employee performance the supervisor or manager must work with the employee to establish performance expectations or goals. Once goals are established it is the role of the supervisor to provide support, coaching and feedback to enable the employees to

meet his/her performance expectations. On a regular basis, (ie. weekly for seasonal workers and monthly for year-round workers) managers should let employees know how they are doing and to what extent they are meeting performance expectations. They should also provide positive feedback as to how the employee can improve. Answer the following questions.

- a. Are performance expectations for each position clearly thought out and communicated to each employee? Yes No
- b. Do managers and supervisors provide performance feedback and coaching on a regular basis – at least monthly? Yes No

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| c. Are procedures in place to let employees know how they are doing on a regular basis? | Yes | No |
| d. Are employees involved in evaluating their own performance and setting goals for the future? | Yes | No |

5. Management of Immigrant Employees Assessment

Management of immigrant employees presents special challenges. A large part of effective communication depends on overcoming the language barrier. Culture often influences supervisory practices and an employee's

motivation. Team building is important to ensure business productivity and mutual respect among all employees. Careful attention to each of these issues will result in a productive and satisfied workforce. Answer the following questions:

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| a. Has the language barrier (if one exists) been effectively overcome? | Yes | No |
| b. Have you, your managers and supervisors been trained in cross-cultural supervision? | Yes | No |
| c. Have new immigrant workers been properly introduced to the activities and functions of your business? | Yes | No |
| d. Have new immigrant workers been properly introduced to the activities and functions of your community (i.e. stores, medical facilities, etc.)? | Yes | No |
| e. Do you work to create a multicultural team? | Yes | No |

6. Compliance with Labor Laws and Regulations Assessment

You are impacted by a variety of labor laws and regulations, especially as they relate to the seasonal workforce. Labor law compliance and keeping up with relevant labor laws, requesting forms ahead of

time and completing the appropriate paperwork in a timely basis is important to running a successful fruit farm business.

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| a. Do you have a work agreement covering N.Y. Labor Dept. and MSWPA requirements (if necessary)? | Yes | No |
| b. Do you have an I-9 form filled out for each employee?
Other forms: W4 Form, NY 2104 Form, Housing Notification Form
(if subject to federal MSWPA laws) | Yes | No |

7. Employee Housing Assessment

It is critical to provide adequate housing for harvest help. The need may also arise for you to house the families of your seasonal help, particularly when they arrive in May or June to help with planting and stay for summer work and

right through harvest. If you need information on housing improvement and financing assistance, refer to the resource section of this workbook. Answer the following questions:

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| 1. Do you have housing for summer and harvest help on or nearby your farm? | Yes | No |
| a. If this housing is for four or more persons, does it meet NYS Department of Health standards? | Yes | No |
| b. If the housing is for less than four persons, does it meet United States Department of Labor standards for migrant workers? | Yes | No |
| c. If the housing is for offshore labor (H-2a Program), does it meet Offshore Labor Housing requirements? | Yes | No |
| d. Is your housing permitted and regularly inspected? | Yes | No |
| e. Does your housing pass regular inspections? | Yes | No |
| If no: are you constantly addressing inspection deficiencies? | Yes | No |
| 2. Is current housing in good repair (no major work needed on roof, heating system, water and plumbing)? | Yes | No |
| 3. Is your housing adequate enough to attract more harvest help or help for peak labor needs? | Yes | No |
| a. If no, is more housing available in the community? | Yes | No |
| b. Will this housing meet the standards of any of the above regulators? | Yes | No |
| 4. Do you employ and house enough people in order to get the maximum return for your fruit? | Yes | No |
| a. Are you able to harvest each variety of fruit on your farm in a timely manner (meet CA cutoff date or processor premium and delivery cutoff dates)? | Yes | No |
| b. Are you able to pick all your apples before they fall to the ground? | Yes | No |
| c. Are you able to pick varieties by the maturity date to meet the quality requirements of the fresh market? (Answer "no" if you have to divert fresh apples to peeler or juice markets.) | Yes | No |

Labor Planning Summary

Refer back to your responses to the questions in this section and complete this summary. List below the areas of improvement pertaining to labor you have identified.

Labor Areas for Improvement	
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