
Farm Employee Management: Evaluation and Selection of Job Candidates

Significant time and energy goes into the employee recruitment and interview process. The farm employer has invested effort in various stages such as: (1) analysis of labor needs; (2) writing position descriptions and recruitment of candidates; (3) scheduling and conducting well-planned interviews. When the interview process is complete, the employer will check references, evaluate the candidates, and hopefully extend a job offer.

The process of evaluating the candidates following the interview and reference-checking stage should be given the same attention as other steps in the employment process. Ideally, the recruitment and interview steps have yielded several candidates from which to choose. It is important to reflect on the candidates and take the time to make a good selection. Farm operators know the investment necessary to hire and train employees.

First, go back to the position description and review the necessary qualifications for the job. Make an assessment of how well each candidate meets the basic qualifications and rank them on this basis.

Second, consider and rank the candidates in regard to other traits that you want to see in your team members. These include attributes such as dependability, positive attitude, aptitude, and ability to get along with co-workers. Your interview process and reference checks will help you to gather information on these characteristics.

In an ideal world, the job applicant who is most highly qualified in terms of experience and education will also possess the skills to work well with others along with dependability, a positive attitude, and willingness to learn. However, we sometimes find extremely qualified individuals who lack the attitudinal skills needed in the farm workplace.

Surveys show that a number of top reasons for employee termination are unrelated to job task performance, but rather connected to employee inability to appropriately interact with co-workers and supervisors. Problems include the refusal to follow directions, talking too much and causing conflict with co-workers, resulting in reduced productivity. Interview techniques can give the employer insight into these issues and assist in evaluating the candidates. Reference checks can also be of some assistance.

As you narrow your choices, remember that a job applicant with the right attitude and people skills may be a better choice even if the individual is lacking in some specific job skill. It may be worth the employer's time and investment to provide some training for particular tasks to a willing learner. It is much more difficult - if not impossible - for the employer to teach attitudinal skills that were missing long before the applicant came to your farm. It may be preferable to select the candidate who will fit into the make-up of your team if you can provide training for work duties.

Once your employment offer has been accepted, bring the new employee in as soon as possible to complete the paperwork, forms and procedures necessary for compliance with state and federal law. See Information File C6-58, [Checklist for Iowa Agricultural Employers](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c6-58.pdf), www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c6-58.pdf, (or check with your own state agencies), for a list of those forms and links to instructions. Get your new employee off to a good start with a planned orientation program as well as initial and ongoing training opportunities.

Farm Employee Management Series

The complete [Farm Employee Management Series](https://go.iastate.edu/AGDMEMPLOYEEEMGMT) can be found on the Ag Decision Maker website, <https://go.iastate.edu/AGDMEMPLOYEEEMGMT>.

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