



RIGHT PEOPLE/RIGHT JOB: MAKE HIRING PROCESS A PRIORITY

BY FELIX SORIANO



HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE RIGHT JOB IS ONE of the most important and difficult jobs for a dairy manager. It requires planning and a logical process to improve new-employee success rates.

Although time consuming, good preparation is of utmost importance. The cost of mistakes can be high if the right hiring process is not followed, so hiring slowly and with care. Follow this outline to help improve your hiring success rate:

1) Reviewing the job specifications.

When a vacancy occurs, the manager should review the job specifications and create a job description. Consulting with other workers already doing the job can be beneficial.

A complete job description should include required qualifications (abilities and skills needed); an outline and description of the position's duties; the relationships with other workers and managers (i.e., who will this person report to, and if he/she will oversee other workers); and work schedule and hours.

A job description can be an essential tool during the interview process, accurately describing the job to the candidates, and helping the manager better identify the right candidate.

2) Recruiting.

Finding appropriate candidates can be time consuming, but a dairy's reputation can make this part of the process easier. Dairies with a reputation of being good employers and paying well may have a line of candidates ready to interview fairly quickly.

A good place to start is asking current employees for potential candidates. Contacting your veterinarian, nutritionist and other consultants may be helpful. Letting neighbor dairies and friends know the type of candidate you are looking for can also be effective. Also, a manager can

check with previous applicants who left their contact information to see if they are still available. Going to college recruiting days can be effective when looking for summer part-time employees and for searching for potential future candidates. Also, recruiting companies specialized in dairy and farming can be options, although more costly. Finally, dairy magazine ads, posting on bulletin boards and social media can be other ways of searching for candidates.

3) Applicant screening.

Before the interviews, the manager should do a telephone pre-screening to weed out candidates who will not work out, due to their unwillingness to work the specific schedule or hours expected, those not willing to relocate, or those without the necessary experience. Pre-screening can save a lot of time during the interview process.

4) Interview process.

Being prepared for the interviews is important. The manager should prepare a few open-ended questions, such as "What do you like about working at a dairy farm?"

Have some behavioral questions ready, such as "What would you do if you're milking the fresh heifer group and a cow is giving you a lot of trouble kicking the unit off?"

Finally, the manager should also prepare some job-related questions that can shed light about how much experience the candidate has: "In your previous job, what was the protocol when a cow got mastitis? Were you responsible for treating cows? If so, what was the treatment protocol you used?"

The interviewer should be careful not to ask personal questions regarding marital status, or if the candidate has children. Instead, the manager should ask the following question: "Would you be able to work this schedule or these hours? Could you work on weekends?"

TAKING THE CANDIDATE ON A TOUR OF THE DAIRY CAN BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR AROUND THE COWS AND OTHER PEOPLE

During the interview, the manager should let the candidate do most of the talking. The manager should also prepare a scoring checklist with items related to candidate's abilities, skills, knowledge and experience.

Taking the candidate on a tour of the dairy can be a great opportunity to see the person's behavior around the cows and other people, and evaluate the candidate's familiarity with specific areas and jobs.

Ideally, if the manager decides to make a second round of interviews of top candidates, current employees can be part of the interview process.

5) Check references.

The interviewer should always ask for references. The candidate's previous employers may provide valuable information about the candidate's personality, character and performance.

6) Job offer.

Once the final decision is made and the candidate is offered the job, a clear understanding on the job's schedule, salary structure and other details, like housing, must be provided. If a medical examination is part of the new-employee routine, then the job offer can be made conditional upon passing a job-related physical and drug test.

The manager should contact – by phone, e-mail or letter – the candidates who were not selected. This is a good practice, since at some point they could be potential candidates for another job.

7) The orientation program.

The orientation program is one of the most neglected functions in most dairy operations. New employees are often left to gain knowledge and skills on the go, without access to proper formal orientation and training. This frequently

results in unproductive employees who don't care much about the dairy, and end up leaving within the first year.

First impressions are crucial. Just as the manager is forming an impression about the new employee, the new employee is doing the same of the manager and the dairy. This is why it's so important that, during the first days of work, managers take the necessary time to work and orient the new employee to their new job and the dairy.

Developing an effective orientation program will:

- **Create a positive attitude and job satisfaction among new employees.**
- **Better align what people do to what's expected from them.**
- **Reduce labor turnover.**
- **Reduce start-up cost by reducing costly accidents or mistakes.**
- **Save time for the manager and co-workers.**

Also, using an employee handbook during the orientation of new employees can be a great tool to provide more information about the history of the dairy, facilities, salary structure, compensation policies and other important things that should be communicated within the first week of work.

Go to my website at www.apndairy.com for more information about the orientation program and employee handbooks.

Finally, hiring an interpreter and translating all materials used during the interviews and orientation for those employees/candidates whose native language is not English is a must. Both the new-employee orientation and training program must be done in the worker's native language to be most effective. 🐄

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