Creating more Effective Farm Teams

Research-backed suggestions for better employee relations

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First A Little Bit About My Work

I encourage you to explore my website and reach out to me if you have suggestions for research that would be useful to you, your operation, or the ag industry:
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My Research:

- Effects of Overtime Laws (worker hours and income $\downarrow$)
- Effects of Minimum Wage Laws (worker productivity $\downarrow$)
- Effects of Paying for Speed and Quality
- Effects of Pollution on Worker Productivity
- Employee and Employer Needs Assessments (today...)


FARM HELP WANTED
EXPERIENCE HELPFUL


WANTED -
VOLUNTEER WORKERS TO HELP HARVEST
AND PACK AMERICA'S FRUITS, VEGETABLES,
GRAINS, AND OTHER VITAL CROPS


Successful
Farming
HELP WANTED
FINDING FARM HELP IS TOUGH; THESE FARMERS DISCOVER NEW WAYS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES P.28
PLUS:
Aha Moments in Transition Planning P. 52
Farmers Test 6 New Products P. 34
For families who make farming and ranching their business! | March 2018 | Vol. 116 | No. 4 | Agriculture.com

Motivation and Background

Farm employers across the country are reporting too few (qualified) workers to meet their needs.

Two strategies to solve this problem: improve **recruitment** and **retention**.

When I say **improve recruitment**, I mean...

- ↑ *quantity* and *quality* of job applicants
- ↑ preferred job candidate(s) *accept the job offer*

When I say **improve retention**, I mean...

- ↑ *duration of employment* (for "good" employees)

Both can be accomplished by creating a more desirable work environment, increasing job satisfaction; "becoming the employer of choice"

Goals for Today... One Step Toward a More Effective Farm Team

Goal 1: Apply Best Practices for Change Management

I will summarize research-backed approaches to creating change in the workplace.

You will apply these best practices when filling out the session handout.

Goal 2: Identify Potential Change Areas

I will provide ideas for areas, or domains, to focus your change efforts.

You will identify an area that makes the most sense for your operation.

Goal 3: Select Changes and Create Goals

I will offer examples of specific changes and associated goals.

You will create 1-3 goals based around the changes you want to make.

Best Practices for Change Management

What is change management?

> *"The systematic approach and application of knowledge, tools and resources to deal with change."*
>
> — *Society for Human Resource Management*

> *"But when you think about it, isn't all management the management of change?"*
>
> — *Robert H. Schaffer, Harvard Business Review*

What "systematic approach" should you use?

Lots to choose from!

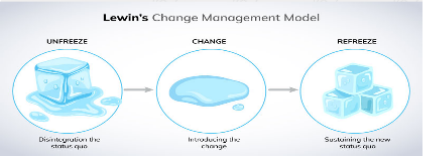
SHRM Change Management Model

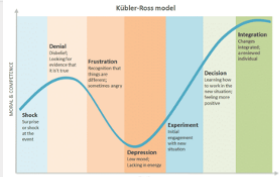
DEFINE
- Clarify roles in change management process
- Clarify what is changing and why
- Identify stakeholders
- Establish project timeframe
- Clarify success measures

PLAN
- Conduct impact and stakeholder assessments
- Create change and stakeholder engagement plans
- Identify risks and create risk-mitigation plans
- Design plans for communications and training

IMPLEMENT
- Enable/activate catalysts and leaders
- Roll out communications and training plans
- Monitor and manage resistance
- Deploy risk-mitigation plans

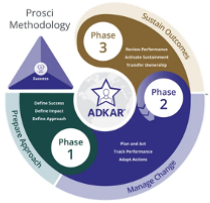
SUSTAIN
- Monitor adoption of change(s)
- Reinforce behaviors that are aligned to the change
- Measure impact of change(s)
- Adjust as needed based on metrics











KOTTER'S 8-STEP CHANGE MODEL

Forming a Guiding Coalition
- Assembling a group with enough power to lead the change effort
- Encouraging the group to work together as a team

Communicating the Vision
ng every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies aching new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition

Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins
- Planning for visible performance improvements
- Creating those improvements
- Recognizing and rewarding employees involved in the improvements

Institutionalizing New Approaches
- Articulating the connections between the new behaviors and corporate success
- Developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession



Establishing a Sense of Urgency
- Examining market and competitive realities
- Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities

Creating a Vision
- Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
- Encouraging the group to work together as a team

Empowering Others to Act on the Vision
- Getting rid of obstacles to change
- Changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision
- Encouraging risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions

Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change
- Using increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't fit the vision
- Hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision
- Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents

AIHR | ACADEMY TO INNOVATE HR

Best Practices for Change Management

Commonalities pre-implementation: (our focus today, integrated in the handout)

1. Make fewer changes at once (I suggest 1 focus area and 1-3 changes)
2. Define *what* is changing (I suggest setting SMART goals)
3. Understand, clarify, and communicate *why* the change is necessary
4. Identify measures of success
5. Plan, plan, plan! Prepare for training, resistance, risks...

Commonalities during and post-implementation:

1. Roll out your plans, troubleshoot and adjust as needed
2. Monitor and manage resistance, reinforce acceptance
3. Measure impacts on measures of success and other indicators
4. Integrate/institutionalize the changes

Change Areas for a More Effective Farm Team

Why change areas?

When making multiple changes to your business, it can be helpful if they have a theme or contribute to similar overarching objectives.

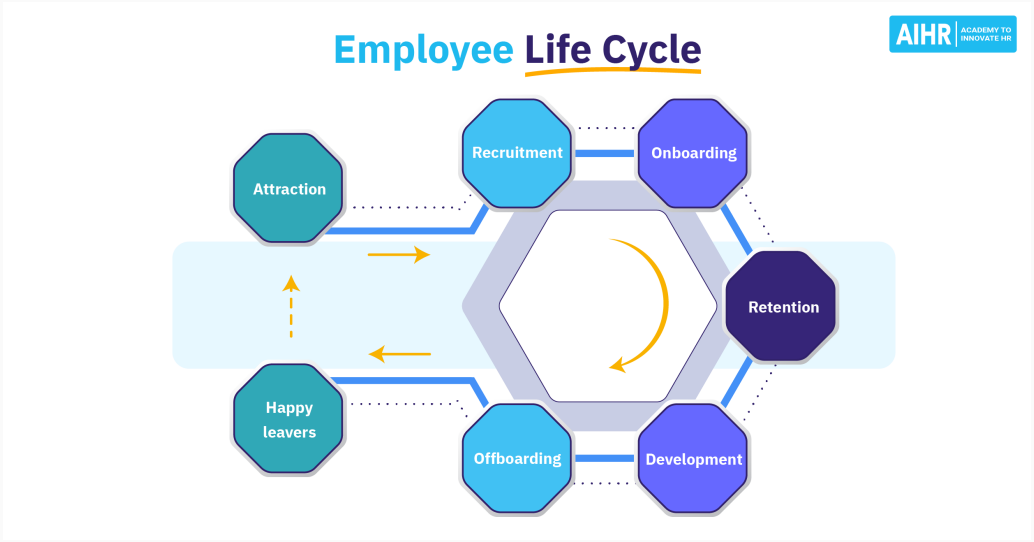
But these themes, objectives, or "areas" can be defined in a variety of ways.

I will provide you with some ideas for change areas.
You will choose one that you think will be most beneficial for your operation.



Step 1: Choose a Change Area

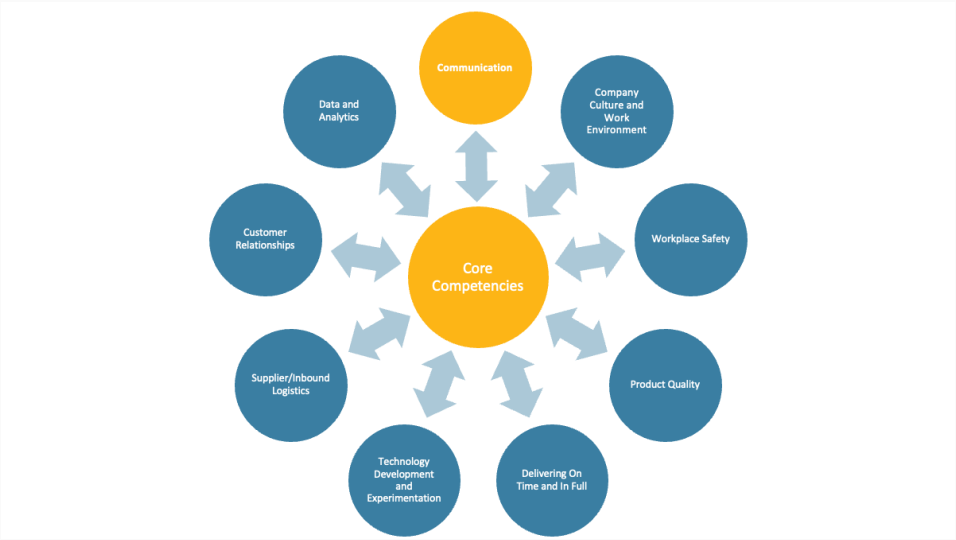
The Nodes of the Employee Life Cycle as Change Areas



Components of Employer-Employee Relations as Change Areas



Business Core Competencies as Change Areas



Goal Setting: What are SMART Goals?

S	**Specific**	Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning	
M	**Measurable**	Make sure your goal and progress are measurable	
A	**Achievable**	Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame	
R	**Relevant**	Your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives	
T	**Time-based**	Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation	

indeed

SMART Goals for a More Effective Farm Team

Within your change area, I want you to select 1-3 changes you are interested in making on your operation.

Changes might involve implementing new practices, policies, or procedures, or removing or phasing out old and ineffective practices, policies, or procedures.

For each change, formulate a SMART goal for accomplishing the change.

I will offer some examples of specific changes and associated goals.

You will create 1-3 goals based around the changes you want to implement.



Step 2: Set 1-3 SMART Goals

Communication

"There is a depressing hostile environment... where staff performance is criticized step by step"

"Here people don't use insults or anything, everything is very nice"

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



Studies of US farm workers suggest that improving organizational communication $\rightarrow$ $\uparrow$ job satisfaction and $\downarrow$ turnover intentions (Billikopf, 1997; Hobbs et al., 2020; Strochlic and Hamerschlag, 2005; Ugoretz, 2021)

Communication Channels:

Pre- or post-shift huddles.

$\rightarrow$ Beginning June 1, each crew will gather at the end of the day on M-W-F for a 15 minute "debrief" meeting.

Create communication channels.

$\rightarrow$ By Feb. 1, I will identify an effective communication channel (e.g., WhatsApp) to ensure employees at all levels can directly communicate with myself and others on the management team.

Some Communication Channels/Platforms

There are a variety of **free** apps you can use to communicate with your workers:

- WhatsApp
- Facebook/Facebook groups
- GroupMe
- Slack

There are some excellent **paid** options as well:

- Ganaz
- Harvust

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



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Communication Styles:

Supervisor training.

$\rightarrow$ By XX, I will identify 3 trainings on effective communication. By YY, I will select a training. By ZZ, 75% of supervisors will attend.

Review and update employee manuals.

$\rightarrow$ By XX, I will review the Farm Labor Dashboard and the Agricultural Justice Project. By YY, I will update employee manuals with expectations for communication and procedures for misconduct.

Some Training Resources

SHRM Educational Programs Cornell's Agricultural Supervisory Leadership Online Course

Farm Employers Labor Service Trainings

American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers: Farm Management Education

The Illinois Small Farm Manager Certification Program

The Illinois Certified Livestock Manager Training

Cornell's Small Farms Workshops, Trainings, and Online Courses

Opportunities for Feedback and Reporting

"Yes, you can report. But it should be confidential... You can report but you do not see any change."

"Even if there are women and men together, here it's respect everything, lots of respect."

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments

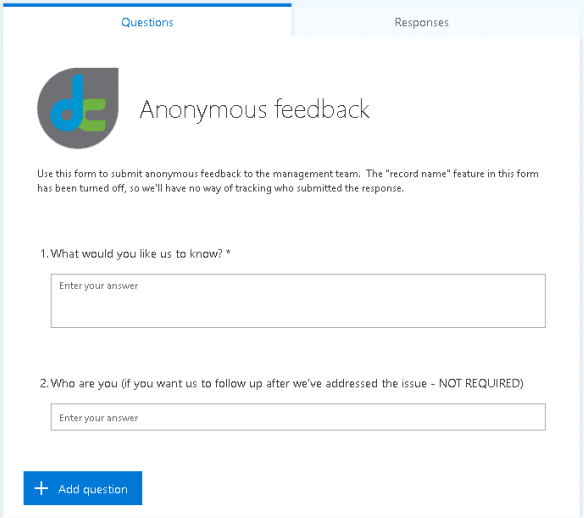


Studies of US farm workers suggest a need for anonymous reporting, and you can use similar strategies to learn about the needs of your own workers by conducting surveys.

Anonymous Reporting:

→ By XX, I will create a simple google form to collect anonymous employee feedback. By YY, I will post QR codes and a url to access the form in all employee bathrooms and rest areas. We will check responses weekly and address any serious complaints immediately.

Simple Employee Feedback Forms



Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



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Anonymous Reporting:

→ By XX, I will create a simple google form to collect anonymous employee feedback. By YY, I will post QR codes and a url to access the form in all employee bathrooms and rest areas. We will check responses weekly and address any serious complaints immediately.

Employee Feedback:

→ By XX, I will administer the agricultural job satisfaction survey to all employees. I will incentivize completion by entering workers who complete the survey in a raffle for 4 $50 gift cards.

The Agricultural Job Satisfaction Survey

Company Name:		Job Role:						
Employee type: (circle one)	Permanent Employee	Seasonal *(first season at company)*	Seasonal *(worked here previously)*					
Please rate each of the statements below				Disagree			Agree	
				Strongly	Moderately	Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
1	**I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do**			0	1	2	3	4	5
2	**There is too much arguing and fighting at work**			0	1	2	3	4	5
3	**I am satisfied with my chances for promotion** For example: permanent from seasonal employee, crew leader, specialized worker (e.g., tractor driver, irrigator)			0	1	2	3	4	5
4	**I worry about the effects of agricultural work on my body**			0	1	2	3	4	5
5	**The benefits we receive are as good as most other companies offer** For example: medical insurance, vacation days, 401k, etc.			0	1	2	3	4	5
6	**I feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be**			0	1	2	3	4	5
7	**The goals of this company are clear to me**			0	1	2	3	4	5
8	**My job is convenient for my family**			0	1	2	3	4	5
9	**I am satisfied with the benefits I receive** (For example: medical insurance, vacation days, 401k)			0	1	2	3	4	5

A Simple Satisfaction Survey

How satisfied are you with the following?

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Your work environment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your supervisor	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Number of days off	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Overall Work schedule	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The salary received	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The number of hours worked per week	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The number of extra hours worked per week	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Housing accommodations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Meals (or kitchen facilities) provided by employer	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Compensation

"40 hours work per week is not enough. We can't afford the rent anymore"

"Pay should reflect experience. Some people don't know how to do the work, yet are paid the same"

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



Of course compensation is linked with job satisfaction and employee motivation, but most research indicates that it is poor or unfair compensation that are really problematic. (Herzberg, 2003; Hobbs et al., 2020; Ugoretz, 2021)

Equitable Pay:

→ By XX, I will administer a survey to understand whether my employees perceive my pay rates as fair internally (does pay reflect effort, experience, and job responsibilities?) and externally (is my pay competitive with other employers in the area?).

Promotions and Raises:

→ I will require employees to meet with HR every 6 months to discuss their performance and pathways for raises and promotions. I will ensure pathways for promotion are clear in employee manuals.

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



Consider total compensation, rather than just pay.

Bonuses:

→ I will offer workers a $100 retention bonus for working at least 100 days this season. I will offer a $50 bonus for employment referrals. I will pay an extra $0.50 per bucket without defective fruits.

Benefits:

→ I will offer two weeks of paid vacation days for long-term employees. I will organize requests to minimize disruptions.

Other Perks:

→ Take product home, reimburse for commuting, provide all work attire and equipment.

Suggested Changes and Goals Based on Farmworker Needs Assessments



There are many possibilities for improving the work environment: focusing on health and safety, fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace, facilitating skill development, and more.

Safety:

→ I will make all written health and safety materials availble in the native languages of all employees.

Diversity and Inclusion:

→ I will organize three employee appreciation parties based around holidays celebrated in my employees' cultures. I will update add a statement on our commitment to diversity and inclusion to the website.

Skill Development:

→ I will ask someone from the nearby community college to speak to my workforce about free learning opportunities.

Explain Your Why

For each change, I want you to write a brief description of **why** you are setting this as a goal. This should be something that:

1. Links the goal to bigger-picture objectives consistent with your organization's mission, vision, values, or bottom-line
2. You can share with your team

An example: I am hoping that surveying our employees demonstrates our commitment to understanding and improving their well-being. This will help us identify key problem areas and create solutions. This might be result in higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and even higher profits.



Make a Plan for Measuring Success

For each change, I want you to identify 1 **metric** (or more than 1) that you can use to measure success. You should also identify **values** that indicates success (e.g., 10% ↑).

- Number of qualified job applicants (target: 5, current: 0)
- Job acceptance rate (100%, up from current 75%)
- Diversity of job applicants (5 college students, 50% females, reflect community)
- Monthly turnover rate (3%, down from current 10%)
- Employee job satisfaction (10% increase in score)
- Employee productivity (5% increase)
- Sales, customer feedback, other KPIs



Step 4: Make a Plan for Measuring Success

Thank you!

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Resources for Creating More Effective Farm Teams

UCCE Napa: Positive Labor Tools and Resources to improve farmworker well-being and address labor challenges

- The Agricultural Job Satisfaction Survey
- Strategies for Effective Communication & Positive Culture
- Beneficial Strategies for Workplace Health & Safety

The Farm Labor Dashboard from UVM

- Personnel Policy Generator
- Job Description Generator
- Active Listening Tips Sheet

Resources for Creating More Effective Farm Teams

FairShare CSA Coallition's Toolkits and Trainings

- Farming into the Future by Centering Farmworkers
- Attracting and Retaining Employees on Organic Vegetable Farms
- Becoming the Employer of Choice

The Agricultural Justice Project Toolkit

Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development

- Onboarding
- Performance Management

Resources for Creating More Effective Farm Teams

Penn State Extension Labor Relations

Missouri Farm Labor Guide

Farm Commons

MSU Extension: Farm Labor & Human Resources

- Employee Handbook Template
- Labor Laws and Michigan Agriculture

References

Billikopf, G. E. (1997). Workers prefer growers over flcs. *California Agriculture*, 51:30–32.

Herzberg, F. (2003). One more time: How do you motivate employees? *Harvard Business Review*.

Hobbs, M., Klachky, E., and Cooper, M. (2020). Job satisfaction assessments of agricultural workers help employers improve the work environment and reduce turnover. *California Agriculture*, 74:30–39.

Strochlic, R. and Hamerschlag, K. (2005). Best labor management practices on twelve california farms: Toward a more sustainable food system. Technical report, California Institute for Rural Studies. https://cirsinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Best-Labor-Practices-on-Twelve-California-Farms-Toward-a-More-Sustainable-Food-System.pdf.

Ugoretz, S. J. (2021). Attracting and retaining employees on organic vegetable farms. Technical report, FairShare CSA Coallition. https://www.csacoalition.org/$_f iles/ugd/b47209_45feeba8cd4e4e6289f61cdad4ad36d8.pdf$