

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STAFF

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Background

Working with people is an essential part of running a profitable farming business. There are many challenges facing farm owners and managers including attracting, leading and managing your team. With a proactive and professional approach, your business can improve success in attracting employees and then maintaining positive ongoing relationships. This approach positions your business as an employer of choice.

Key points

To assist your business in becoming an employer of choice, consider these aspects:

1. Culture

Culture is defined as the demonstrable values that are lived by the business owner. Culture is directly influenced by the leaders of an organisation. It can be enhanced or eroded at any time. Cultural alignment between owner and employees is essential for a strong business, as alignment of values and culture leads to improved performance.

- You may have a robust business strategy but without the right culture, the strategy will fail.
- Recruit for the right attitude that reflects your culture. You can train and develop the skills required if your team has the right attitude.

2. Professional operation

Set yourself up for success by operating as a professional business.

This includes:

- Thorough recruitment process.
- Clarity in your employment expectations (job descriptions).

- Systems and procedures that support your workplace culture (lead by example).
- A culture of accountability including record keeping.
- Induct and train all staff members to support their capacity development.
- Regularly undertake performance reviews that provide two way feedback.
- Preserve confidentiality at all times.

3. Communication

Communication is an essential trait of successful teams. On-farm this looks like:

- Developing 'game plans' for key operations such as seeding or harvest.
- Undertaking weekly toolbox meetings to ensure the team is clear on the tasks for the week.
- Clear roles and responsibilities that provide an outline of expectations and tasks.
- Use of messaging apps to keep in touch during the day (whatsapp or messenger).
- Effective delegation ensures clarity on task expectations, facilitates skill development and frees up time. Effective delegation includes – what I need done, by when, what does success look like, what happens when something goes wrong and check-ins along the way.
- Dealing proactively with any team issues as they arise.

4. Know the standards

Ensure your professional business understands the workplace standards and ensures compliance. Employees are motivated by security, structure and clarity.

These workplace standards include:

- FairWork
- Modern Pastoral Award
- Workplace health and safety

5. Leadership

To attract and retain your team, focus on yourself and developing your leadership skills. One foundational framework is to ensure you 'work above the line'. This is operating with ownership, accountability and responsibility. The opposite is blaming, making excuses and being in denial (below the line).

'Working above the line' is a choice you make as a leader; it will create trust and enhance your team function.

Follow-up

Contact Carlyn Sherriff or Dee Heinjus at Pinion Advisory, 1300 746 466.

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Useful references

FairWork <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Modern Pastoral Award 2020 https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/documents/modern_awards/award/ma000035/default.htm

Farmers' guidebook to work health and safety <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/industry/agriculture/farmers-guidebook-to-work-health-and-safety>

