

Obviously, if the match is good, there is no need for adjustment. The second situation above suggests a need to review employees' skills and interests and either reassign them or modify jobs to achieve a better match of farm needs and their talents. The third situation raises questions of whether an employee could be retrained, expansion is in the cards, or the dismissal of an employee is necessary. The last one normally triggers a hiring process (see Chapter 3).



Assessing Managerial Capacity

Self-analysis isn't easy, but it is incumbent on every manager and is a part of an employer's assessment of management resources in the farm business. Instruments are available to assist in examining one's own abilities and dispositions relevant to managerial work. Several are available at AgHelpWanted.org.

To embark on a less structured, lower-tech introspection, consider some questions like those below. It may be helpful to discuss them with a spouse or other trusted partner.

- What are your personal strengths and weaknesses?
- What supervisory experience and skills do you have?
- Can you teach and listen effectively?
- What are your attitudes toward family members and hired employees?
- Do you expect different things from people of different cultural backgrounds or genders or with personal interests outside the ranch that you do not share?
- Can you trust others (and who?) to control work and resources of great importance to you?
- How do you react to others' mistakes, complaints, and recommendations?
- What things about you do current employees respect or like?



Planning for Growth of the Nuñez Dairy

James Nuñez is a 39-year-old dairy farmer. He is married to Nancy and has two children, 16-year-old Robert and 12-year-old Shannon. James enjoys good health and has been able to run his 90-head operation with help from his family, one full-time key man, one part-time milker, and casual workers for special projects from time to time. His son carries more of the load during the summer and occasionally on weekends, but Robert's interests have been growing in many nonagricultural areas.

Current Situation and Goals

One of James' goals has been to expand his current herd of 90 purebred Holsteins by at least 15 dry cows and calves. Recently, he had an opportunity to purchase a smaller dairy about two miles away. The purchase would include land, buildings, cows, and quota. He realized that the expanded operation would be too big for him to run with his current staff and he would have to decide who else would be needed if the purchase went through.

He knew that his farm buildings and equipment were in good repair, and he wanted to maintain them that way. With his 80 hectares (200 acres) in crop (hay and corn), he aims at harvesting three cuts of hay in a good season and one crop of corn silage. The farm he was looking to purchase had a 40-cow herd, including only four dry cows and calves. It had 24 hectares (60 acres) of land, much of its building maintenance had been deferred, and the equipment there was fair. If he were to purchase this farm, he would want to centralize all animal operations at his present location.

Thinking about his personal strengths and weaknesses, James saw himself as a competent and

caring employer but realized that he might not be sufficiently assertive. He thought he was a good teacher but acknowledged that his tendency toward perfectionism might make him impatient with an inexperienced employee. At times in the past, he had started to delegate an important job but ended up doing it himself to be sure that it was done right. He knew that he was a good listener and certainly appreciated the importance of treating employees well.

Labor Needs, Workforce, and Work Conditions

As James considered the implications of expanding his operation, he asked himself some important questions:

- Will my current staff be adequate or will I have to hire more people?
- If I hire more employees, what jobs will I assign to them?
- Will I need to re-assign some duties to or away from my current staff?
- How will this change affect my family?
- Can I start sharing some management work with Robert and expecting more from him?
- Is he even interested in taking a more responsible role in the dairy?

With help from his local public employment service representative, James wrote simple job descriptions for each of the people working on his farm and completed a labor estimate worksheet to start analyzing the fit between his current labor needs and workforce. He discovered that:

- Jeff Anderson, the one full-time employee, does one milking a day, five days per week. The rest of the time he performs general farm work, including feeding. He gets two days off per week and works long days during haylage and corn silage harvest without any time off. This usually lasts from eight to ten days.
- James' wife, Nancy, does one milking a day, five days per week. James has a part-time milker, Ken Norton, who comes in to milk two days per week. Nancy would like to quit her one shift per day if they decide to purchase the nearby dairy.
- James himself looks after all the management duties and all of the herd health-care duties. In addition, he assists Jeff with some of the general farm work, takes care of field preparation and planting for the corn crop, and does all of the hay and silage cutting.
- During the hay season, up to five casual employees help bring it in.

James was surprised to realize how many hours per week and per day he actually spends working on the farm. It was very clear that to expand his operation, meet Nancy's wishes, and maintain his good health, he would need to make significant changes in staffing and distribution of work. He discussed possible changes with his family and staff. In considering the dairy work environment, his current management practices, and what he could offer employees, James came up with the following list of inducements:

- Good wages and benefits, at or above the local norm, and possibly an incentive bonus (giving one calf to each employee after a good year)
- One day in seven and every second weekend off
- Free housing and utilities
- Comfortable buildings and top-notch equipment to work with

- His personal willingness to listen and consult with employees
- Opportunities to participate in any future growth

The Verdict

After much discussion with his family, attorney, and even current employees, James decided to go ahead with the purchase. Job changes will be:

1. James will continue to carry all management duties and to perform some of the general farm duties, including field preparation, corn planting, haying, and silage work.
2. Jeff will take on the extra responsibility of herd care and most general farm duties. He will help James to bring in the silage but will no longer milk cows except in emergencies.
3. A new full-time milker will be hired. That person will milk both shifts five days per week.
4. Nancy will not eliminate but will cut her milking chores to both shifts on one day per week. She also will gently encourage Shannon to start helping out around the dairy.
5. Robert, while still in school, will take on the regular responsibility of milking one day per week, both shifts, and will participate in some of the general farm duties during silage and haying.
6. James will continue to hire five casual employees through the employment service to bring in the hay.

These adjustments are reflected in the new labor estimate worksheet that James completed, in pencil, and adjusted as he planned (see pages 49-50). He was relieved to find that the addition of only one more full-time employee appeared necessary to make his herd expansion feasible. And he is confident that additional revenue from his larger operation will exceed the added costs by enough to pay off the purchase within less than 20 years.

The current Nuñez labor force

Section 1			
Task analysis - crops: <i>Currently 200 acres of hay and corn</i>			
Type of work & when	Length of time	Total hours	People required
Haylage June	8 days; 10 hrs/day	160	(2) James & Jeff
Hay 8,000 bales June/July/August	3 days; 10hrs/day 2 times per year	60	(1) James
Hay 8,000 bales June/July/August	3 days; 6 hrs/day 2 times per year	180	(5) Casual employees
Field preparation April/Early May	4 days; 10 hrs/day	40	(1) James
Corn planting May	4 days; 10 hrs/day	40	(1) James
Corn silage September/October	8 days; 10 hrs/day	160	(2) James & Jeff
Section 2			
Task analysis - animals: <i>Currently 90-cow herd</i>			
Type of work & when	Length of time	Total hours	People required
Milking 2x/day 3 hrs/shift	6 hrs/day x 365 days	2,190	(3) Jeff - 1 shift Nancy - 1 shift Ken - 2 days/wk
Herd care Daily	2 hrs/day x 365 days	730	(1) James
General - feeding, manure removal Daily	7 hrs/day x 365 days	2,555	(2) James - 3 hrs/day Jeff - 4 hrs/day
Farm management	4 hrs/day x 6 days/wk	1,248	(1) James

Section 3 Total farm or business requirements: <i>Currently 200 acres, 90-cow herd</i>					
Type of work & when	Total hours per year	Total hours per week	Who performs the task	Hours per week per person	
Milking Daily	2,190	42	Jeff Nancy Ken	15 15 12	
Herd care Daily	730	14	James	14	
General Daily	2,555	49	James Jeff	21 28	
Management Daily	1,248	24	James	24	
Haylage June	160	140	James Jeff	70 70	
Field preparation End April/Early May	40	40	James	40	
Corn planting May	40	40	James	40	
Haying June/July/August	240	120	James 5 Casuals	30 90	
Corn silage October	160	140	James Jeff	70 70	
Section 4 Employee schedule/hourly analysis: <i>Currently</i>					
Employee	Normal weekly hours	Normal daily hours	Weekly hours incl. overtime	Daily hours incl. overtime	Possible overtime weeks
James	59	8.5	129	18.5	5
Nancy	15	3	—	—	—
Jeff	43	8.5	113	16	2
Ken	12	6	—	—	—
5 Casuals	180	6	—	—	—

The adjusted Nuñez labor force

Section 1 Task analysis - crops: <i>Expanded operation, 260 acres hay and corn</i>			
Type of work & when	Length of time	Total hours	People required
Haylage June	12 days; 10 hrs/day	240	(2) James & Jeff
Hay 10,000 bales June/July/August	4 days; 10 hrs/day 2 times per year	80	(1) James
Hay 10,000 bales June/July/August	4 days; 6 hrs/day 2 times per year	240	(5) Casual employees
Field preparation April/Early May	6 days; 10 hrs/day	60	(1) James
Corn planting May	6 days; 10 hrs/day	60	(1) James
Corn silage September/October	12 days; 10 hrs/day	240	(2) James & Jeff
Section 2 Task analysis - animals: <i>Expanded operation, 120-cow herd</i>			
Type of work & when	Length of time	Total hours	People required
Milking 2x/day	8 hrs/day x 365 days 2 - 4 hr shift/day	2,920	(3) Milker - 5 days/wk Nancy - 1 day/wk Robert - 1 day/wk
Herd care Daily	3 hrs/day x 365 days	1,095	(1) Jeff
General - feeding Daily	7 hrs/day x 365 days	2,555	(3) James, Robert, Jeff
Farm management	4 hrs/day x 6 days/wk	1,248	(1) James

Section 3					
Total farm or business requirements: <i>Expanded operation, 260 acres, 120-cow herd</i>					
Type of work & when	Total hours per year	Total hours per week	Who performs the task	Hours per week per person	
Milking Daily	2,920	56	Milker Nancy Ken	40 8 8	
Herd care Daily	1,095	21	Jeff	21	
General Daily	2,555	49	James Jeff (& Robert)	21 28	
Management Daily	1,248	24	James	24	
Haylage June	240	140	James Jeff	70 70	
Field preparation End April/Early May	60	60	James	60	
Corn planting May	60	60	James	60	
Haying June/July/August	320	160	James 5 Casuals	40 120	
Corn silage October	240	140	James Jeff	70 70	
Section 4					
Employee schedule/hourly analysis: <i>Expanded operation</i>					
Employee	Normal weekly hours	Normal daily hours	Weekly hours incl. overtime	Daily hours incl. overtime	Possible overtime weeks
James	45	8.5	69	12	5
Nancy	8	8	—	—	—
Jeff	49	10	63	12	3
Milker	40	8	—	—	—
5 Casuals	240	6	—	—	—
Robert	(milking) 8 (summer) 40	8 8	— —	— —	— —