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Enhancing Employee Ability

Matching employee ability with job requirements is a key part of personnel management. Knowing the requirements of an open position, developing an accurate job description, recruiting through the appropriate channels, and following a rational selection process all increase the chances of hiring employees with adequate ability (Chapter 3).

Training Needs

No matter how thorough the recruitment and selection processes, new employees need some training when they come to the job. There is always more to get across about what to do, why, and how, as well as about the terms of employment under which the work is to be done. Some employee training, such as in injury and illness prevention, is specifically required by law, but most training is simply a matter of operational necessity. Introductory training is virtually essential, even for seasonal and part-time employees.

Even when workers are selected for their previously demonstrated competence in certain tasks, managers put time into describing and urging adherence to favored operational methods. Most growers and producers like to see jobs completed in a specific way. The more effectively managers explain their expectations, the more satisfied both they and their employees will be with initial on-the-job performance, provided all other things are equal.

When employee qualifications do not fully match the requirements of the job, training can remedy initial deficiencies. Potential employees sometimes interview for openings that require knowledge or abilities they do not possess. In such cases, managers must consider an applicant's ability to learn along with his or her current skills. They also have to carefully evaluate whether the costs of training an existing employee (or even a new hire) outweigh the benefits of finding and hiring someone who has the necessary qualifications. Where hiring is based more on such "character attributes" as honesty, loyalty, integrity, responsibility, and learning potential, there is a greater need to help workers develop specific skills on the job. In addition, some managers find they want to ease workers out of certain techniques or work habits that were learned elsewhere.