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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.

Training employees to know what they are supposed to do, how to do it, and why produces two types of benefits. Productivity and quality improve as workers do the right task the right way, waste less time and fewer materials, and offer new and better methods of completing their duties. Likewise, job satisfaction among employees improves as they successfully meet new challenges and feel the support of their manager. Both eventually translate into improved profits for the business.

When committing to an investment in training, the logical starting place is to understand what the job requires and what employees do and do not know. Training even helps workers who do the most basic and simple tasks. Jobs of every type can be done easier, faster, or wrong.

A crew of greenhouse workers packaged potted plants for shipment. After the crew was simply shown a different way to perform that task, the total number of pots prepared per worker per hour more than doubled, climbing from 189 to 488.



While all training may not result in such dramatic results, there is room to improve productivity in virtually all agricultural operations.

Training Methods

Once the level of employee knowledge and skills for a job has been assessed against job requirements, training can be designed to address real needs. Training that combines explanatory instruction, practical demonstration, and hands-on experience is often best to ensure that employees will be able to actually apply new information to their jobs. There are many ways to involve learners in both planning and conducting the training.



Overview of purposeful workplace training

- Review the symptoms of need for training such as productivity statistics, performance appraisals, turnover rates, accident experience, and employee requests.
- Set objectives and a timeframe in terms of tasks that workers would be able to do, things they would know, and standards to which they would perform after training.
- Plan the content, methods, setting, and schedule for training sessions.
- Deliver the training by informing, explaining, showing, advising, observing, asking, assessing, and refining.
- Evaluate the extent to which the objectives have been met; consider more than how the employees feel about the training in the short-term.