



# Enterprising Rural Families™

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This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. For further information concerning the *Enterprising Rural Families* program or on-line course contact [information@eRuralFamilies.org](mailto:information@eRuralFamilies.org) or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

## TIP OF THE MONTH:

### MARKETING PLAN

#### Five “P”s of a market plan:

##### Products or Services:

- What do your products or services do?
- What makes your’s unique or special?
- Who will buy them?
- When will they buy them?
- How much will you charge?

##### Packaging:

This is the way your business is presented to the marketplace. It includes things like the image of your business and the consistency of your presentation in **all** communications.

##### Place:

Where do you do business? The location needs to “fit” the customer expectations. What is your position in the distribution chain? Retail outlets don’t do well in the industrial section.

##### Pricing:

Determined by things like cost of production, demand, what the market will support, perceived value, replacement cost of equipment, waste of raw materials and damage, annual inflation, advertising costs, and wages and salaries.

##### Promotion:

Promotion includes personal selling, word of mouth, public relations, sales promotions, and advertising.

## Help Your Employees Work Harder and Smarter

To employee and employer alike, the words “performance evaluation” tend to raise visions of an interrogation complete with bright lights and a commandant demanding answers.

But performance appraisals shouldn’t cause anxiety. Workers and their supervisors constantly evaluate each other. An approving smile, an angry scowl, a pat on the back, an exasperated sigh...they’re all performance evaluations. A job review is just a more structured version of the same thing, says Lorne Owen, former British Columbia ag. ministry farm management specialist and co-author of *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work*.™

Whether you have one employee or twenty, time invested in performance appraisals is time well spent. Treat the exercise not as a distasteful chore, but as an opportunity to motivate your staff.

Motivation is a money-maker. Motivated employees work harder and smarter because they want to. Sure, employees appreciate a raise, says Owen, but they won’t respond by increasing productivity. In contrast, evaluations cost little and typically improve productivity by 20% or more.

People need to know how they’re doing, explains Owen. Good performance reviews charge employees up. They come out knowing where they stand, that they’re appreciated, and where they have to improve. They have goals to strive for.

Start your evaluation procedure by establishing performance expectations. Set up concise job descriptions with specific performance objectives. Then decide what you’re going to evaluate. Select criteria appropriate to the job tasks. Don’t measure a laborer’s performance with the same yardstick you use to assess the work of a technical specialist, advises Owen. Different positions demand different evaluation criteria.

John Schroeder, president of Valleybrook Gardens Ltd., evaluates the 15 full-time and 60 seasonal employees working at his Abbotsford, British Columbia, flower operation.



Evaluations are based on their knowledge and understanding of specific duties they were hired to do, work quality, productivity, initiative, judgment, interpersonal relations with co-workers and supervisors, and attendance.

To get maximum benefit out of a performance appraisal, focus on the positive and the future, suggests Schroeder. Summarize employees' principal strengths and suggest skills that need improving. Then lay out specific plans for achieving needed upgrading. These can include on-the-job training, and technical or personal improvement courses. He also recommends making formal performance evaluation a regular (say, yearly) and predictable event.

Lorne Owen agrees but stresses the need for continuous informal evaluation. Regular feedback reminds employees of your expectations, and tells them whether they're on the right track. Frequent feedback is also a way to keep employees motivated, says Owen, especially if you make a point of "catching them doing something right." If employees get frequent feedback, an actual job review shouldn't produce any surprises. As the name suggests, it's a review and evaluation of what happened in the past, and an opportunity to chart a course for the future.

At Valleybrook, employees fill out a one-page self-evaluation before interviews. They summarize their understanding of their job, list their most significant achievements since the last review, and note what they hope to achieve in the next time period. They're asked how satisfied they are with their current job and, if not satisfied, what changes they would like.

Getting employees to take an active role in the evaluation process helps defuse anxiety, says Schroeder, They come away with the feeling that they and their ideas matter; that they're not working in a vacuum. And as an employer, you get to hear their concerns—along with suggestion for improving your business.

Candid discussion tells workers what's valued and what they should strive to change or achieve. Most people want to excel, notes Owen. Properly done, evaluation improves morale which in turn improves productivity. That's the key, he says. "Some employers see performance appraisal as the first step in getting rid of unproductive employees. But with a good evaluation system, you won't have poor performers to get rid of."

Edited by Randy R. Weigel, Professor and University of Wyoming Extension Specialist.  
Reference: *Country Guide*, September 1995

