



Enterprising Rural FamiliesTM

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 or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

TIPS OF THE MONTH:

- All family businesses must do some form of inventory and assessment to form a clear picture of assets, strengths, weaknesses, and individuals before, during, and after goal setting.

Questions to ask:

- ⇒ Where do we want to go?
- ⇒ How do we get there?
- ⇒ Why are we doing this?
- ⇒ Who is best for the job?

Determine who does what.

Study the community.

Once you have a clear picture, you have opportunity for success.

- Goals form the very “heart” of the management process. They describe the direction and timing of effort needed, as well as who will be involved. Goals can measure progress. Goals should be all encompassing. Goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Related, Time-Associated.

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Hiring the Right Employee the First Time

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Looking for your first employee? Have you hired some who were less than desirable? Hiring the right employee for your business is important. They often handle your money, your customers, your products and you may spend more time with them than your family. So why do some small businesses get stuck with bad employees? Typically, it's because we fail to search, prepare and interview candidates thoroughly, and are anxious to hire someone hoping they will work out. Bad hiring habits can result in high turnover or problem employees which negatively impact your business.



To ensure that applicants' goals and skills match with jobs, small businesses should use a sequence of selection techniques. Following a consistent, complete process will improve your odds of staying within Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws and hiring the best employee for your business. Planning including developing a job description, recruiting applicants, and interviewing applicants will help in selecting the most qualified employee who is the right fit for the job.

When preparing to interview job candidates, it's important for small business owners to plan out their lines of questioning. Decide which skills are most important for the position, and then focus your questions on assessing those skills. Here are some sample questions to work from:

Employment history

1. If you had to evaluate your performance in your present job on a scale of 1 to 10, how would you grade yourself and why?
2. What skills have you acquired in your present job that makes you the right candidate for this job?
3. Describe a recent event in your job that challenged your capabilities. How did you handle the situation?
4. Why do you want to leave your current job?
5. When you saw this position advertised, what attracted you to working for our company?
6. Where do you hope to be in 5 years in your career and how does this position fit with your goals?



Communications

1. Are you more comfortable working on a team or on your own?
2. What types of people do you find difficult to work with?
3. How often do you like to meet with your supervisor?
4. Describe what you consider to be the perfect boss.
5. If you had an idea for a new project or new way to complete a job, how would you communicate it to your co-workers or supervisor and get it approved?

Organization

1. How do you go about planning your schedule for the day?
2. How do you relieve stress at work?
3. What tasks in your present job do you consider to be a waste of time?
4. Do you consider yourself efficient? Why?
5. If you were given a long-term project, how would you approach the work?
6. If you came to work and had several projects you were currently working on, and your supervisor gave you three new projects how would you prioritize which project to work on?

Motivation

1. Tell me about a work situation when you really blew it. How did you handle the situation? What did you learn?
2. What motivates you to do your best?
3. Think of a major accomplishment you had in your present job. What aspect did you find most satisfying? Why?
4. If you could by any skill that you don't possess, what would it be?
5. What tactics should a supervisor use to get the best out of you?

Managerial

1. What qualities do you possess that would make you a good manager?
2. Tell me about the best manager you ever had and what you learned from that person.
3. Tell me about your worst manager and what you learned from that person.
4. How do you create an environment that fosters teamwork?
5. Share an example of a conflict you may have had at a past job. How did you resolve the situation?

Specific Job Skill Questions

1. When you look at the job responsibilities for this position, what are your greatest strengths? On the other end of the spectrum, what weaknesses do you have?
2. Share your experience from a past job in (fill in the blank job task).
3. If you were asked to teach another employee how to _____ how would you proceed?
4. How would you define success in this job?
5. In the time you have known about this position, what do you see as your role in the company?

8 questions to NEVER ask

1. Are you married? Divorced?
2. How old are you?
3. Do you have (or plan to have) children?
4. Do you own or rent your home?
5. What church do you attend?
6. Do you have any debts?
7. Do you belong to any social or political groups?
8. Do you suffer from a disability?

Always allow time for the candidates to ask questions about the company and the job. Remember that in the workforce today, it is important that you hire the person who is the right fit for the job opening.



For positions which require technical skills which might include operating equipment, or if clerical in nature, developing spread sheets, offering job testing may be appropriate. Develop a short test to evaluate if the applicant actually can perform a specific task of the job.

Reference checks are both an intuitive and systematic process that includes a wide range of job-related issues, such as performance on a previous jobs and the ability to work with people. Checking references may appear to be a simple matter, but it is one of the least understood aspects of the selection process. The contacts that should be made depend on the nature of the job. Generally applicants are asked to provide names and contact information for three – four references. As a prospective employer you should inform the applicant that you are contacting references. If the applicant is currently employed, ask if you can contact their supervisor. For references to serve as indicators of future performance, the people who provide them must be knowledgeable. It is natural for applicants to select individuals who they believe will provide positive information about them. Ask for names of individuals who can provide information on work related qualifications. When references are contacted, generally by phone, ask a short list of pertinent questions. Be prepared to share briefly the major responsibilities of the position. To ensure a fair hiring process, ask the same questions for all applicants. Here are a few sample questions.

Reference Questions:

1. How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity? (this will tell you if it is a work related reference, character reference or friend)
2. What strengths would this applicant bring to the position?
3. What weaknesses can you identify that the applicant may have in regard to this job?
4. How would you describe the applicants' interpersonal skills – how well do they get along with others?
5. Can you tell me about the applicants' ability to bring projects to completion?
6. If you had this position open, would you hire (or if they previously worked for this individual) or re-hire this individual? Why?
7. Is there anything else we should know about the candidate?

Though it might seem like a time consuming task to contact references, in my experience, valuable insight into the performance of the employee can be identified. It is worth the time to call references for the top one or two candidates before a job offer is extended.

The overall objective of screening and interviewing candidates is to hire the applicant with a high probability for job success for your small business.

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