Introduction

the way a farm is run. However, there is one common and key element amongst all farms regardless of the above factors. Every farm involves people. It doesn't matter if you employ a few key staff members, a single manager, or are responsible for a large number of employees in a corporate farm setting, it is vital to the running of your farm that employ.

All farms are different and the day to day operations will differ

employees, and hours and days of operation, will all contribute to

greatly. Factors such as size, location, produce, climate,



you know how to engage and communicate with the people you People efficient farms

• effective recruitment and

REMEMBER

and not just controlled from the 'top down'

1. Set a date for the performance appraisal

and areas they may need more development or training in.

in good order selection processes reasonable hours • clear and efficient work relevant training and career clear induction process practices and operating for all staff development opportunities procedures

• well laid out and equipment

 clear and concise • simplified farming systems to regular, meaningful team contracts and accommodate people's needs meetings agreements for staff

- employees who can work • open lines of • wise investments in technology effectively in a team communication
- productive and smoothly clearly set out safety engaged and dedicated
- protocols employees run
- relevant training and career regular performance development opportunities appraisals
- Performance appraisals
- just as important in making sure your employees are on the right track and are managing a good work-life balance. Following through on appropriate actions or suggestions that come from these informal appraisals shows your employees that you listen to them and value their opinions on the

Individual performance relies on people being involved. People are more productive,

enthusiastic and committed when they are involved in planning and decision making,

Formal performance appraisals have two main purposes. They are there to review any completed or ongoing work and to plan for the future. They are not simply a one way process whereby an employee is evaluated, rather they should be a discussion or a conversation regarding the best direction to take in terms of performance, expectations, training and development, and work-life balance.

Performance appraisals are usually held at least every 6 months but you might need to hold more

frequent appraisals if someone changes roles or during times of rapid change or unusual activity in

the business. For new staff, you may want to have monthly meetings followed with a review at the

end of the probationary period (see <u>How do I employ someone</u>? for information on probationary

periods). Plan to hold meetings at a time that suits everyone, employees should be paid for their time during a performance appraisal. Make sure that the meeting is held in a comfortable and private space so that the discussion won't be interrupted. 2. Prepare for the meeting in advance Employees should be given plenty of notice and have the process and purpose for the appraisal

explained to them. Let them know that the appraisal is a two way discussion and they should

prepare any concerns, questions, or requests they might have. It's also a good idea to give them a

copy of the performance appraisal sheet so they can start thinking about areas where they excel

If this is not the first review an employee has been through, they should reflect on any outcomes or

and • what the mid to long term future of the employee is with the business, and any development or training required to meet that.

3. Meet to do the performance appraisal (a two-way discussion)

• Check that any planned work load or tasks are 'doable' and not unreasonable • The interaction should be positive, people should leave an appraisal feeling motivated and supported

4. Jointly plan the activities for the next few months

discuss any training or support the employee may need.

ratings differ.

In its simplest form, the planned actions can be a list of tasks that clearly describe the person's role within each task (especially whether they "are responsible for" or "assist") and date for completion of the task. This list can be recorded on the **performance** appraisal sheet

individual responsibilities to make the 'big picture' achievable and ensure their workload is do-able.

The performance appraisal process is also a way of planning areas of work and activities, and

training plan can be discussed and developed at the appraisal. 5. Review conditions of employment

If you are going to include a salary review in the appraisal, let the individual know this will be a topic

for discussion. Not all appraisals have to include salary reviews as these are usually done annually.

However, it is a good opportunity to confirm that salary and time off requirements are being

When you finish the meeting you need to make sure that the information discussed was clearly

met. You can also include questions regarding other benefits and allowances.

• the targets are realistic and can be directly influenced by the person

and have good coverage of the duties and responsibilities, and

• the person is able (technically competent and supported) to do the tasks

• explain monitoring and timelines proposed for any remedial strategies

• summarise what's been achieved since the last appraisal meeting, reinforcing the contribution of the person • recap any significant gaps that were identified during the discussions

• if appropriate, reward a job well done! (read **Reward and Recognition** for ideas to suit your farm

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES The performance appraisal sheet provides prompts for discussing the actions of the previous review period as well as enabling you to document agreed actions for the

description.

Training Programs

followed up regularly in order for them to be effective.

be treated as one. Consider the cycle below as an approach to training on your farm. 1. Determining skills and training required

training in your employees. This can be an opportunity to discuss current roles and future directions

• Does the person have the appropriate knowledge and skills for all tasks they currently complete

• Would development of specific personal skills, attitudes and aptitudes be of benefit? For example,

A training plan is the actions needed to reduce an individual's skill gaps. Essentially, a training plan

• Does the person have qualifications that are needed? e.g. a Chemical User's Certificate.

The <u>performance appraisal</u> can be a great time to identify areas for improvement and further

When you think of a training program or staff development, you need to think of it as an ongoing

process, not just a box to be ticked and never revisited. Learning is a lifelong process and it should

There are many different ways training can be conducted, sometimes it is possible to conduct training in-house. This may be done by an experienced employee with specialist knowledge or more informally through coaching or extension programs.

Coaching is an extremely useful, but often neglected, skills development process and is probably

Coaching is about changing habits to achieve the minimum standards expected on the farm. It

skills and to motivate them to try something new (learn a new skill or take on a new job in the

Extension programs can be as simple as field days, professional development workshops or

discussion groups promoting awareness of information. These are as much a part of the learning

• an opportunity to keep up with state-of-the-art information and technology (especially when

• a way of keeping in touch with the social network as information gathering – being able to catch

Some things, such as first aid training or licences for specific machinery, require accredited training

Training Organisation (RTO). See the Australian Skills Quality Authority or iVET for links and more

and will need to be conducted by qualified instructors who are usually employed by a Registered

are also offered online, make sure you read reviews and investigate any online courses or RTOs

before committing to pay for training. If a deal seems too good to be true - it usually is! Remember -

Another thing to consider is the level of the training. If the skills or knowledge being

complex knowledge and skills, it might be best spread over a number of sessions to

session. On the other hand, if the training material is quite dense and involves

developed are relatively simple, then it is probably best to hold a single short training

involves helping employees to take on new ways of doing things or new roles and requires constant

feedback between the learner and the coach. The coach's role is to build on the individual's existing

online learning requires your employee to be very organised with their time and a self-motivated learner. **IMPORTANT**

Is the training at the right level?

4. Evaluating the training

Mentoring

allow employees time to 'digest' the information.

It is important that you evaluate the training at the end of each program.

• Did your employees find the training useful? Why or why not?

• Can the learner demonstrate improved or changed performance?

• What needs to be included or left out next time?

• Was the facilitator / educator effective at their job?

• Was the timeframe appropriate to the expected results?

training so that necessary changes can be made in the future.

Dairy – Dairy Education and Careers Meat and Livestock Australia – Extension Training and Tools

In addition to training, mentoring is another opportunity to develop the people in your business. It

career plans, test a personal or professional goal or navigate a business through difficult situations.

Mentoring is a supportive and private relationship between two people (the mentor and the mentee)

and provides those involved with an opportunity to share and develop their knowledge, experience,

confidence, having talked through options and possible consequences. It is more about asking the

Mentoring is not only an effective way of sharing experience but also the transfer of technical skills

and experience. Using senior staff as mentors is a great way of recognising their knowledge and

experience within the industry without necessarily promoting them to a position as a supervisor.

skills, wisdom and shortcomings. Mentoring helps the mentee approach new situations with

can help individuals acquire and develop new skills, build confidence and self-esteem, accelerate

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TOP

- it can also be useful to plan in advance how long the formal mentoring is going to continue. Often
- the Mentor, it helps to build leadership skills, improve communication skills, and offers opportunities to learn new perspectives.

flexible work rosters with

farm. See more about communication and recognition and reward in the Working together section.

Follow the guidelines below when planning for your performance appraisals.

goals from previous reviews and be prepared to discuss them. In the week before the meeting, the manager should think about: • the individual's performance against the position description • the main areas of work over the next few months • what the person will be asked to do and whether it is consistent with their position description,

During the appraisal process you should review any actions from previous meetings and discuss the

outcomes. The employee and the manager can also share their evaluation of the performance

compared to the position description. Most discussion should focus on areas where performance

A positive rating from the individual compared to a lower rating from the manager suggests that

and a low rating from the individual could indicate a lack of confidence. This is the time to be

Consider these key points for effective communication when conducting your appraisal.

• Make sure that there is enough time for both manager and individual to give and receive

Discussions should be two-way, both parties need to talk and to listen too!

constructive and helpful feedback (we can all improve what we do)

objective and listen for indicators of what may be limiting performance. It's also a good time to

the individual may not fully understand the expectations of the role. A high rating from the manager

REMEMBER People new to the farm will be relatively unfamiliar with procedures and cannot be expected to work efficiently and effectively without some on-the-job training. A

6. Summing up the meeting

understood by all involved. You should also check that:

• the workload is reasonable and achievable

• each action is clearly described and understood

• restate what the next steps are (as discussed)

7. Take action on issues raised during the review

• confirm commitments to training, and

situation).

workplace.

right behaviour.

arrangements of other workers. When pulling the discussion together:

• the agreed actions and standard of work are consistent with the position description for the job

• the workload fits the calendar of other events on farm, public and school holidays, and leave

Following up on issues is just as important, if not more so, than the actual appraisal process itself. Without action, the appraisal process cannot improve work performance. You should document any agreed actions and timelines and give a signed copy to the relevant employees (action plans should be signed by both managers and employees).

Managers and the performance appraisal process itself also need to be reviewed. Employees should

You also need to look at your performance targets. If they are not being met or you are not seeing

Remember - Performance appraisals are an ongoing process and need to be completed and

the results that you expected, question whether you are measuring the right things or rewarding the

next review period. Note: this should be adjusted to complement the position

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TOP

be given an opportunity to comment on the process and the way they are managed in the

Investing in the development of your employees' skills, knowledge and technical competence is really an investment in the farm itself. Showing people that they are valued members of your team and worth investing in, not only boosts morale and motivation, it can also help people perform their jobs more efficiently and reduce staff turnover.

for both the employee and the farm as a business.

How does the person contribute to the farm?

2. Design a training plan

should answer the following question;

3. Consider the options for training

most relevant in on-site training.

system as more formal education programs.

up and discuss things with other farmers.

Accredited education and training

discussions and themes that are usually highly topical

Extension programs can provide:

facilitated by an expert), and

workplace).

• Who will complete the training?

Some questions that may help identify skills gaps are:

and any tasks they may complete in the future?

• What do you want the person to achieve? What do they want to achieve?

how to be a good team leader, skills in conflict management etc.

- Who will conduct the training? • Where will the training be conducted? (on or off site) • When will the training be completed? How long will it take? What are the expected outcomes? • How does the training fit in with your farm as a business? How does it benefit the business and the individual? • How much will it cost?
- information about RTOs. If you are training a number of employees at once, it can sometimes be cheaper to have an instructor come to your workplace than to pay for individual courses for each employee. Some training will be ongoing and will need to be conducted off site at a TAFE or RTO. Many courses
- 5. Performance appraisal and needs analysis

Constructive criticism is very valuable when evaluating the effectiveness of the training programs.

Employees should be encouraged to speak truthfully, anonymously if it is easier for them, about the

that offer them opportunities to develop their skills

will help the relationship work:

right questions and listening, rather than giving the right answers.

• the mentee should know what they are hoping to gain through the relationship and talk this through with the mentor before they agree to start • decide the main reason for entering the relationship – for example to develop a particular skill set

An interested mentee and an experienced and respected person capable of acting as a mentor are

all that is needed to start a mentoring program on your farm. However, there are some factors that

- **RESOURCES AND REFERENCES** formal, it can be just meeting for a coffee! Case studies about mentoring in the meat and livestock industry
- Some of the benefits of mentoring include: • encouraging employee attraction and retention – the best employees are attracted to businesses
- make a short list of what you think the responsibilities of each person should be both people should be able to meet regularly and commit to the meetings • time should be invested early on to allow the relationship to develop
 - - **TOP**
- maximising professional development • reducing staff turnover and improving productivity on the farm • building a positive work culture • improving communication and team work, and • increasing morale and motivation. Starting a mentoring program for people on your farm
- **REMEMBER** Mentoring is a mutually beneficial partnership. For the Mentee, it helps them develop long term goals, learn new skills, and gain 'real life' knowledge about an industry. For

informal relationships will continue after the program has 'ended'

- An easy way to make sure that your employees' skills are training needs are being addressed is to make a needs analysis part of the performance appraisal. You may also like to revisit the needs analysis at regular intervals throughout the year. Remember, by investing in your employees, you are not only improving their work skills, but also helping to create a more efficient, more productive, and safer workplace for everyone. **RESOURCES AND REFERENCES**
- (personal or professional), to have more influence within farming community, to plan a career path
- - Also relevant
 - - **Employers**
- 4 You can use Mentor Link to review progress on mentoring goals. It doesn't need to be

- **TOP** It is important to have regular, structured performance appraisals to make sure your employees are all working effectively towards the running of the business. Having said this, the importance of informal appraisals should not be overlooked. A quick chat about a new policy or procedure, a conversation over lunch about working hours, or a discussion about the direction of the farm can be
- This section will look at staff training programs, professional development opportunities, and the use of mentors in the workplace. Read about Working Together for more information about staff retention, communication strategies, and recognition and reward.
- **TOP** Investing in your employees, or having a 'people efficient' farm doesn't have to be hard work. In fact, putting in a little bit of effort to provide an attractive workplace can end up with great rewards for your farm. Employees who are happy in the workplace and are provided with relevant training, encouragement, guidance, reward, and possibilities for career development, will be much more likely to work harder, care about doing their job properly and want to help you grow your business. So what does a 'people efficient' farm look like?