

# Keeping Good Employees — It Saves Money

**We are all employees for the most part**, with some being owners. Even owners really work for their employees. There is no question that running a business is hard and getting more complicated by the month. If you are an owner, then ultimately everything falls on you — you are where the buck stops. In the end you are responsible for the business as a whole.

Hiring people is sometimes stressful, for both sides, and can take a while until you feel like you have the right person for each job.

So how do you keep good employees? You are now at a crossroad; will you hire them and offer very little besides a paycheck or include benefits that will make them feel like they are wanted and valued? Keeping good employees is no easy task, it usually takes planning, investing and at times going through several people to find the right one.

What happens when you find the right one? It takes them some time to adjust and fit in. We all know how important benefits are, but do we know how much those benefits cost our employers? Not only health insurance, but there are a lot of other benefits that could be offered. All businesses operate similarly regardless of their end product or service.

More states raising minimum wage and businesses are offsetting the increased cost by reducing the 40-hour work week. The end result is often employees who have less than what they started with. Many benefits have been lost. So now what's to keep a person working for you?

## WHAT CAN YOU OFFER?

As of this writing, who knows what will come about with health care or taxes? What we can offer as a business to employees for benefits include: paid sick days, pay for advanced schooling (or even a percentage), paid vacations, overtime and

tax-deferred retirement accounts. You could even start an “employee of the month” program, giving them a day off. Or how about rewarding the employee with the least amount of time taken within a year by a paid day off?

For many (most) families who have children and both parents work, consider the daycare situation. Are you big enough to provide any help, or can you give them flexible hours or even reward them with a gift of a paid month of daycare?

Every business has to look at what training costs from general subjects to those for specific jobs. Weigh that against yearly turnover costs versus paying a little more in benefits.

## REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

If you have taken the time and expense to find and hire a new grower, don't hinder their work by placing unreasonable demands on them. There really is a shortage of qualified (or even unqualified) growers in this country and throwing them away by making their job impossible should not be an option. What do we mean by making their jobs more difficult? How about asking them to trim the pesticide budget? Ask them to use only generic products where the companies do not support the products with added services like problem solving. The problem with cutting a pesticide budget while spending much more on labor is that you cannot replace everyone.

Consider the situation that a crop is lost due to a pest. Not everything is preventable and with new plants introduced every year, we cannot know what might happen to them ahead of time. Even when we know what can happen, we can be thrown a curve ball when the propagation material comes with the added benefit of an insect that is resistant to insecticides or a virus. It is not the grower's fault. Further, if you have prevented them from attending educational meetings, you cannot expect that they will know what to expect from the current season. Give them a chance to excel.

Micromanaging is another area where money can be severely wasted. The supervisor takes time out to double check everything, which costs you money and the employee is demoralized to say the least. Training up front should reduce the need for checking up. It will also foster the commitment of the employee to doing the best job possible. Many potentially good employees leave when conditions are not acceptable to them. After all you are hiring them to do a job — let them do it.

Ask employees for their opinions on solving a problem. Ask them to spot trouble. We have been to many operations over the years where the employees were incentivized to report problems. They are your eyes and ears in the operation. Don't ignore this resource.

For the owners or supervisors, think outside your box. It isn't even comfortable any longer with the changes over the past 30 to 40 years. Why not look into creating a friendlier and more supportive work environment? Make your good employees stay instead of losing them to a more progressive company. [gpn](#)



*Chase Agricultural Consulting, LLC was formed in 2011 by Ann (A.R.) Chase and Mike Zemke. Ann has more than 35 years experience in research, diagnostics and practical consulting in plant pathology. She has been retired from the University of Florida since 1994 but remains on staff as a Professor Emeritus. Mike holds an Associate of Applied Science in manufacturing drafting and started his education in horticulture when he and Ann were married in 1995. He specializes in communications of all sorts within the industry.*