

CHAPTER 4

Hiring

Why is hiring important?

There are few things in business that are more important than hiring the right people. Some say that without the right people, no amount of money can make a business succeed. Likewise, your farm depends on qualified staff to make it run smoothly.

Don't ignore the importance of following all the steps in the hiring process. Ignoring steps in the process can lead to a bad hire.

What's in this chapter?

This chapter outlines a step-by-step process, including who on your farm is involved in the hiring process, reviewing applications, short listing and interviewing candidates, and making the final hiring decision.

It'll help you understand how to create a hiring process.

What will I have when this is done?

When you're finished, you'll have taken the first steps toward creating an effective hiring process that allows you to select the right and most qualified candidate for the job.

What is hiring?

Hiring sounds easy, yet it's one of the most difficult decisions that business owners make.

Traditionally, farm businesses simply hired someone that another farmer recommended. It was quick and easy – no need to go through applications or interviews. However, it was also common for the individual hired to have had little or no experience, which led to trouble later on.

When you make a mistake hiring someone who can't do the job, or won't do the job the way you want, the cost to your farm, you, and your family is incredibly high. Your stress level increases and your profitability decreases. You are no longer focused on running your business, but rather, on ensuring the bad hire isn't making mistakes or causing problems.

An employee is there to add value to your farm business. A bad hire impacts your business' bottom line, staff morale, equipment and assets.

In order to avoid a bad hire and risk making a decision that could potentially cost you money and stress, you should implement a standard process for hiring.

The process doesn't need to be tedious or involve more work, but rather, help you pick the best person for the job and your business.

To create a hiring process, follow these four simple steps:

1. Establish who on your farm should be involved in shortlisting and interviewing candidates.
2. Review the applications.
3. Shortlist applicants.
4. Interview.

Detailed information about these steps is included on the following pages.

Hiring family employees?

You should follow the same hiring process you use when hiring a non-family member, to ensure they fit your farm business before you hire them. Does this person have the skills and behaviours that my farm business needs? Can he or she do the job? Does he or she have the same values and behaviours as the farm's culture?

A four-step hiring process

In Chapter 3 (Recruiting), you learned how and where to get candidates to apply for jobs.

Now, we'll look at taking the next steps in the process: selecting and hiring the right candidate from all of the applications you've received.

Step 1: Establish who from your farm should be involved in shortlisting and interviewing candidates

As the owner, you may not always be involved in the day-to-day activities of each job. Determine who will be, and include these people in shortlisting and interviewing the candidates. If staff are involved in hiring, it can make them more accountable for the new hire's success.

For example:

- If the position is for a general labourer, perhaps the farm owner and position's supervisor need to be involved.
- If the position is for a farm manager, perhaps the farm owner and family need to be involved.

Make sure each person involved in any step of the hiring process:

- has a copy of the job description
- understands the position's role and accountabilities
- understands the selection criteria

Also, ensure that you designate associated tasks to a staff member, including receiving resumes, reviewing the applications, shortlisting, pre-screening and interviewing.

Step 2: Review the applications

You can start the review process in two ways:

1. You can have a formal discussion with staff who are directly involved in hiring for the position.
2. You can distribute a folder, containing copies of the applications and resumes, to each person involved in the selection process.

We recommend that you review all of the applications at the same time, so you can compare them. Also, have a list of what the job requires to ensure an applicant fits the position. It's easy to get excited about an applicant who has hobbies and characteristics similar to yours. However, you need to ensure he or she also has the skills to fill the position.

Step 3: Shortlist the candidates

After reviewing the feedback – either as a group or with the person in charge of hiring – you can shortlist the candidates you wish to interview. Select two to three of the best candidates for each position.

Step 4: The interview process

Now that you've shortlisted the candidates, you can start the interview process.

Some common mistakes farm owners make when interviewing are:

- talking too much or not asking enough or the right questions
 - Remember the 80/20 rule – the candidate should be talking 80 per cent of the time and you should be talking 20 per cent of the time.
- Interviewing at the kitchen table, coffee shop or machine shed
 - This may feel more comfortable, but it isn't effective. The casual nature of the discussion may result in not asking the right questions and getting caught up in small talk.

Pre-screen Interviews

To save yourself time, start the hiring process with a pre-screen phone interview. This can be a five-to-10-minute discussion. Ask questions such as:

- Why are you interested in the job?
- What do you know about our farm?
- Why are you no longer at your last job, or why do you want to change jobs?
- What type of manager do you like to work for?



CASE STUDY: Below is an example of what can happen when you don't use a pre-screen interview:

Sara just graduated from high school and heard about a job at the Wilson farm. The farm is located only 10 miles from her home. Sara was thrilled that the farm was close to her home, and that the position would provide on-the-job training she needs for a career in farm management.

However, she missed the line in the job ad that said the Wilson farm was only looking for an employee for a two-month contract, not a permanent position.

Sara scheduled an appointment with the Wilsons and prepared for the interview. She entered the interview hoping for a new job, only to be disappointed when she learned that the position was short-term.

The Wilsons were disappointed that they wasted their time interviewing a candidate looking for another kind of position.

A pre-screen interview would have saved a lot of time and a disappointed candidate.

In-person Interviews

After completing the pre-screen interviews and finding a number of candidates you wish to meet in person (and who remain interested in the job), you can start the in-person interview process.

Here are four tips when interviewing candidates in person:

TIP #1: The interview should last no longer than an hour.

TIP #2: Plan for the interview and organize it before it begins. Have the job description and interview questions written down and ready to reference. Use behavioural-based questions during the interview.

You are in the agriculture business, not in human resources, so it's especially important to spend time planning and preparing for interviews.

What are behavioural-based interview questions?

Behavioural-based interviewing helps you better understand a candidate's experience and behavioural style – the way they do things. Behavioral-based interview questions reveal to you how a candidate acted in the past, which is a predictor of how he or she will act in the future. With behavioral-based questions, not only do you hear what the candidate has accomplished, but also how the candidate went about accomplishing it. These questions also help you understand how candidates react, think and behave.



EXAMPLE: Below is an example to help you understand the difference between non-behavioural-based interview questions and behavioural-based interview questions. Go to the Forms Appendix (at the back of this manual) for an example list of questions.

Non behavioural-based interview question:

Interviewer: “On our farm, we need to get things done and tend to multitask all the time. Are you able to multitask?”

Candidate: “Yes, I am.”

Outcome: Not only is this a close-ended question, but the interviewer doesn’t ask the candidate for an example of past behaviour.

Behavioural-based interview question:

Interviewer: “Can you give me an example of a time when you had to do a lot of multitasking?”

Candidate: “I remember in my last job when I had to repair two pieces of equipment and then my boss asked me to drive into town and get some supplies he needed.”

Interviewer: “How did you handle the extra request?”

Candidate: “I did what my boss told me and then I did everything else. It was a tough day and I didn’t like the extra task. I just wanted to focus on the repairs.”

Outcome: This candidate has given you a real-life experience in which multitasking seemed challenging. From the response, this person may like to stay focused on one task at a time.

Creating behavioural-based questions

When creating behavioural-based interview questions, it’s important to consider the “core competencies” of the position. Core competencies of a job are the behaviours, skills and knowledge a person needs to have to be successful in the job.

The phrasing of behavioural-based questions is key. Typical behavioural-based questions might start out with: “Tell me about a time...” or “Describe a situation...” This structure encourages the candidate to think about a real-life situation that will demonstrate the ability that you’re looking for.

We’ve included a sample list of behavioural-based questions in the Forms Appendix section.

TIP 3: If you are interviewing more than one person, ask each candidate the same questions and take notes (or have one of your staff/family take notes), or create a form, like the one on the next page, which allows you to quickly rate each answer during or immediately after the interview.



EXAMPLE: Sample interview question and rating form. Go to the Forms Appendix (at the back of this manual) for a blank form.

Candidate name:	Date:
Position being Interviewed for:	Interview completed by:

Ratings: Write one question on each line. After the candidate has answered the question, please rate the answer by circling number one, two or three.

Rating Number	Description
1	Vague answer; no examples; wasn't specific; has no experience.
2	Strong answer; provided examples; directly answered the question; has some experience.
3	Exceptional answer; provided strong examples; directly answered the question; lots of experience and talent.

Candidate Interview Questions:

Question Rating	Rating (Circle One – based on the descriptions above)
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
	1 2 3
TOTAL	

NOTES: Please add any comments or feedback that you would like to share about this candidate:

TIP #4: Don't make on-the-spot hiring decisions – even if an interview went extremely well. You need to allow yourself time to reflect on the candidates before you make a decision. The candidate also needs time to reflect on the interview and consider whether the job is right for him or her.

You'll also need to check references to ensure the accuracy of the candidate's statements. If the candidate provides no references on his or her resume, be sure to ask for the names and titles of at least three work-related references at the end of the interview.

When you call the references, it helps to have a reference form to guide your questions and record the answers, like the one below.



EXAMPLE: Below is a sample of a blank reference form. Go to the Forms Appendix (at the back of this manual) for a blank form.

Applicant Information	
Candidate:	Date of Reference:
Position applied for:	Reference check conducted by:

Reference Information		
Reference provided by:	Company:	
Current title:	Working relationship with candidate:	Phone:

Previous Job Information for Applicant	
Dates worked with previous employer:	
Reasons for leaving:	
Job title:	

Reference Check Questions:

1. How would you describe the applicant in the following areas (rated on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest):

Question	Rating	Notes
Attendance		
Reliability		
Interpersonal Skills		
Verbal/Written Communication Skills		
Sense of Urgency/Initiative		
Ability to Deal with Stress		
Time Management		
Meeting Deadlines		
Customer Service (Internal & External)		

2. What were the major areas of the applicant's job responsibility?

3. What were the main strengths of the applicant?

4. Were there any job areas requiring improvement?

5. What level of supervision did the applicant require?

6. How did the applicant get along with co-workers? For example: Was he/she a team player or did he/she prefer to work independently?

7. Would you re-hire this person?

Additional Comments:

TIP: You may also consider other forms of interview assessments and tests for the candidate before you hire them, including skills and aptitude tests (having the candidate demonstrate skills in person, such as driving the combine).

Step 5: Make a written offer of employment to the candidate

So, after you've interviewed, completed testing for the position, and checked the candidate's references, you're ready to put the offer in writing. You should write the letter of offer and either email or mail it to the candidate or schedule a time for him or her to come to your office to review it and sign.

Make certain that you meet all legal requirements. Ignorance is no defence when it comes to labour laws, so be certain that you have an up-to-date copy of your province's employment regulations, which you can find online.



EXAMPLE: Below is a blank sample of a Letter of Offer:

[INSERT DATE]

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

[INSERT NAME]

[INSERT ADDRESS]

[INSERT CITY, PROV., POSTAL CODE]

Dear [INSERT NAME]:

I'm pleased to offer you the position of [insert job title] with [insert name of business], starting [start date of job]. You'll be reporting to [insert name of supervisor].

The below sets out the terms of your employment with [insert name of business]:

Compensation: Your hourly salary will be [insert salary amount].

Vacation: You will be entitled to [insert number of vacation weeks – ex: two] per year after the completion of one year of employment with [insert name of business], in addition to the usual paid general holidays observed by the company. Future vacation entitlement will follow provincial employment standards legislation.

Probation: You will be on probation for a period of [insert number of months] month(s). While you are on probation, and subject to employment standards legislation, either [insert business name] or you may terminate your employment without notice or cause. During this probationary period we will review whether you are able to meet the requirements of the job and if you are compatible with the company.

Please indicate your acceptance of this offer in the space provided and return a signed copy to my attention. A copy is provided for your files.

We look forward to working with you on our team and if there are any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

[Insert owner name, Name of Business]

My signature confirms that I accept this offer of employment and I had the opportunity to obtain legal or other advice, understand the employment terms and conditions, and accept them voluntarily without pressure.

Employee's Signature

Date