

Practical Techniques to Optimize Employee Performance

Jesse Wright & Seth Wilner
UNH Cooperative Extension

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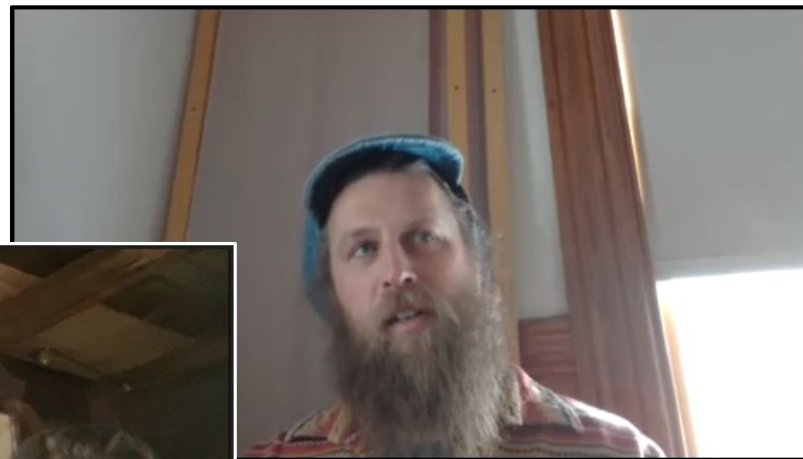
Meet our
contributing
farmers

- First – look around the screen – **you** are part of our panel – this is designed to be interactive- we need you to share your input and experiences!



Meet our other contributing farmers

Jeremiah –
Owner Vernon Family Farm



Alex & Emma –Farm
Employees at VFF

Greg—Owner Spring Ledge Farm




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Review of Staffing Up

Your Farm Culture as Your Guide

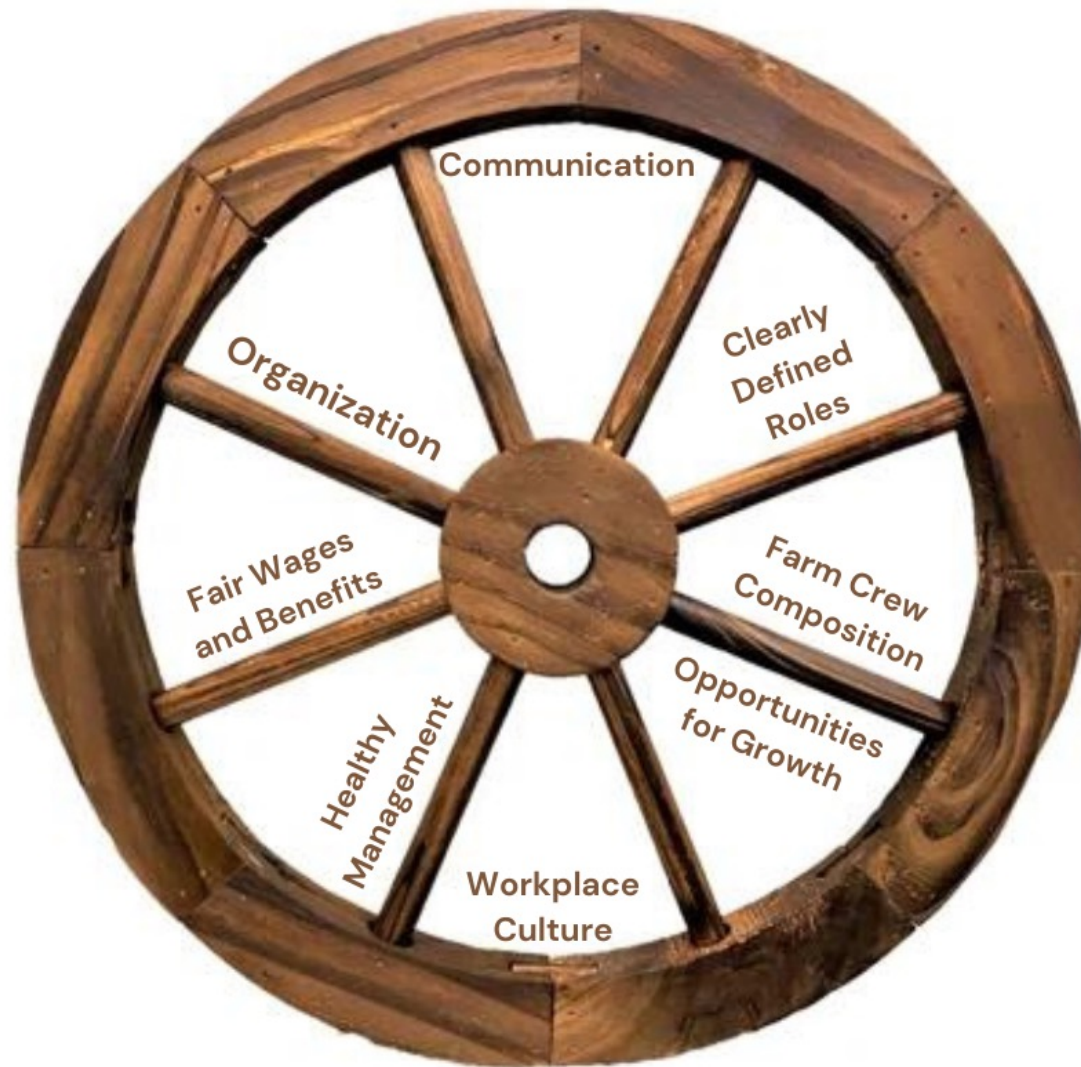
- Whether to hire anyone
 - What jobs or roles to hire
 - Who fits well in your operation
-
- What systems you need to guide your labor force





Video Link: <https://youtu.be/-omTZMtgtkro>

Alex Chase



Epiphany



What Matters to Employees



Organization



Communication



Clearly Defined Roles



Farm Crew
Composition



Opportunities for
Growth &
Development



Workplace Culture



Healthy Management



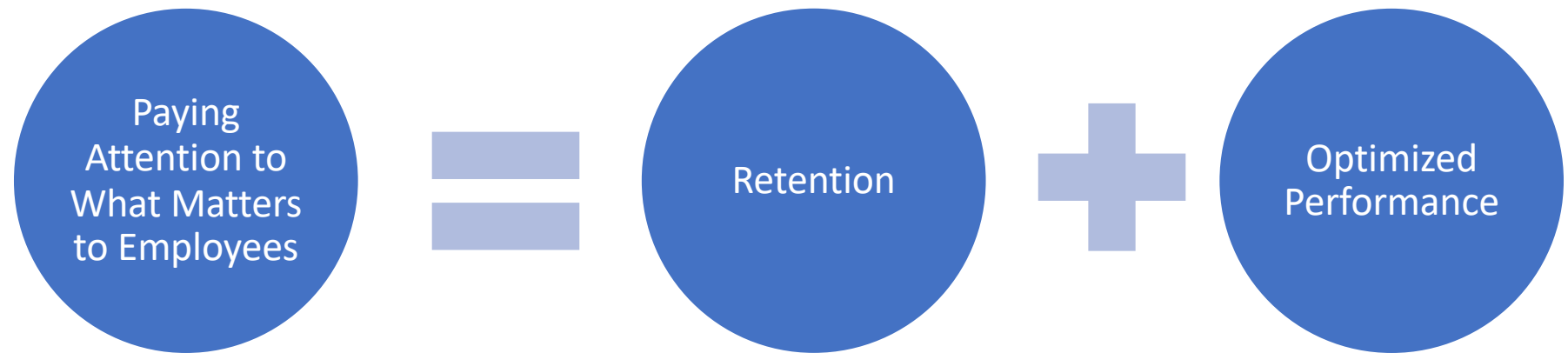
Fair Wages & Benefits

Today's Session

The Crossroads of Culture & Communication

- Understanding What Matters to Your Employees
- Building Successful Relationships with Farm Workers
- How *YOU* Fit Into the Mix
- Tools for Optimizing Employee Performance

What Matters



Article

<https://www.csacoalition.org/files/ugd/b4720945fee8ba8cd4e4e6289f61cdad4ad36d8.pdf>

Attracting and Retaining Employees on Organic Vegetable Farms

Sarah Janes Ugoretz
Doctoral Candidate


University of Wisconsin-Madison, The Nelson Institute
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June 2021



The graphic features a solid orange background. In the center is a large white circle. To the left of this circle, a dashed yellow arc curves around its edge. At the bottom right of the white circle, a small solid blue circle is positioned.

Workplace Culture

A man and a woman are shown in a rustic, dimly lit room with exposed wooden beams. The man, on the left, wears a grey cap, glasses, and a dark shirt. The woman, on the right, has long dark hair and is wearing a brown jacket over a green shirt. In the background, a red fire extinguisher is mounted on the wall, and a white microwave sits on a small shelf. A yellow jacket is hanging on the right side of the frame.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/WR20SIh79sl>

Alex Chase

Workplace Culture

- Intentional
- Communicated
- Co-created with employees

Tools

- Recognition system
- Organization
- Preventative conflict resolution
- Policies to foster respectful environment
- Set example – owners & managers
- Two-way communication



Organization



Your Turn

YOU OPERATE A GREENHOUSE OPERATION, YOUR EMPLOYEES OFTEN WASTE TIME LOOKING FOR TOOLS AND SUPPLIES. THIS FRUSTRATES SOME. IT COSTS YOU MONEY PAYING THEM TO SEARCH FOR THINGS THEY NEED TO DO THEIR JOB.



IN BREAKOUT ROOM, DISCUSS SOLUTIONS TO THIS COMMON CONUNDRUM—TRY AND EACH COME UP WITH SOMETHING DIFFERENT



Video Link: https://youtu.be/_zS-A1GDK1E

greg - spring ledge farm - nh

Organization

- Systems
- Adaptable
- Expected - paid

Tools

- Employee Manual
- Onboarding process
- SOPs
- Culture/expectations
- Setting example
- Lean Farm concepts
- Employees get their own set of tools



Fair Wages & Benefits



greg - spring ledge farm - nh



Seth Wilner



Jesse Wright

Video Link:
<https://youtu.be/RiN-aXOjZuU>



Video Link: <https://youtu.be/hGL2ZxS7Sul>

Fair Wages and Benefits

Employee Cost Estimator

<https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/node/add/cost-calculator>

Employee Cost Estimator

View

Edit

Manage display

This tool is designed to help farmers estimate the total cost of employees. It is intended to assist first time employers with understanding and calculating the complete cost of employees, including federal and state payroll taxes, workers compensation, unemployment taxes, as well as any benefits a grower offers to employees beyond their regular hourly wage.

+ [First time using this tool? Read this before you begin.](#)

Proceed to Tool >


Fair Wages and Benefits

Tools

- Salary
 - Farm Commons Podcast 45 – Why Some Farms Pay Wages as Salary
- Bonuses
- Raises if meet certain criteria
- Employee Manual
- Formal policies (equitable)
- Stipends
- Retirement Contribution (tax offset for qualified retirement plans instead of pre-buys or equipment purchases)
- Setting example
- Lean Farm concepts
- Employees get their own set of tools



Clearly Defined
Roles

A man and a woman are standing in a rustic kitchen. The man on the left is wearing a grey baseball cap, glasses, and a dark t-shirt. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket over a red top. The background features dark wooden walls, a white microwave on a shelf, a red fire extinguisher, and a clipboard hanging on the wall. A blue bar is at the top of the image.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/nKVb1d-tykw>

Clearly Defined Rolls



greg - spring ledge farm - nh



Seth Wilner



Jesse Wright

Video Link:
<https://youtu.be/rLzb0AHXnko>

Clearly Defined Roles & Titles

Didn't realize how important this was

Tools

- Structure
- Boundaries
- Agency
- Autonomy
- Innovation

- Position descriptions
- Training plan
- Two-way communication



Growth & Development

Video Link: https://youtu.be/oocnZ2z_L48

Alex Chase



Video Link: <https://youtu.be/DRtGpPKktac>



Alex Chase

Opportunities for Growth & Development

- Can offset desire for higher wages
- Builds skills employees seek
- Can help the farm in the future
- Highly valued by employees

Tools

- Employee evaluations
- Informal check-ins
- Mentorship
- Professional Development stipend/support
- Training plan

A large white circle is centered on an orange background. To the left of the circle, a dashed yellow arc curves around its edge. At the bottom right of the circle, a small solid blue circle is positioned.

Farm Crew Composition

Reflection

Take a moment and think of positive and negative team experiences on farms

- What was positive ?
- What was negative?
- How could it have been different?

Farm Crew Composition

- Proactive conflict resolution
- Sexual harassment training
- Cultural and language barriers

Tools

- Proactive approach to conflict resolution
- Two-way communication
- Intention gathering of employee feedback
- Training plan
- DiSC and other such processes



Communication



greg - spring ledge farm - nh



Seth Wilner



Jesse Wright

Video Link:
<https://youtu.be/A6gkKmn3aAg>



SPLEDGER

The week of October 24th



Spring Ledge Newsletter

Oct 28th Crew News from the farm -

What's happening on different parts of the farm, some helpful reminders about everyday chores, and some useless trivia.

-October and November hours

The farmstand is open through Monday, Oct. 31st - same hours as usual (closed Tuesdays). Farmstand is closed to the public from Nov. 1st - Nov. 8th. Back open on Nov. 9th. We'll still be closed on Tuesdays all through the months of November and December. We'll be closed on Sunday Nov. 13th and Sunday Nov. 20th. After that, we'll be open each Sunday until Christmas.

-Halloween update

The town of New London is having a trick or treat evening on Sunday, Oct. 30th from 4pm-6pm. Part of Main St. will be closed to vehicles (from the Barn Playhouse to Tracy Library). The farmstand is open for business until 4pm on Sundays and on the 30th, we will set up a little trick or treat farmstand with warm cider and candy to hand out. If we

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

<https://www.springledgefarm.com/so/56OGR6Du7?languageTag=en>



Video link: <https://youtu.be/m-7wx3X3-Bo>

Alex Chase

Communication

- Its all communication! (so, we've learned)
- Spoken, written, pictural, actions, training, policies
- Big picture – how small acts fit into larger pictures
- Short term and long term
- Respectful
- Multi-modal
- Multi-lingual
- Multi-cultural
- Personal Issues

Tools

- Proactive approach to conflict resolution
- Two-way communication
- Intention gathering of employee feedback
- Policy generator handbook (dashboard)
- Employee handbook
- Job descriptions
- Respectful communication
- Informal check-ins
- Tools – white boards, radios, etc



Video Link <https://youtu.be/ML8Yk-JVnqE>

greg - spring ledge farm - nh



Healthy Management

Healthy Management

- Creates respectful workplace
- Actions and Words – show by doing
- Transparency – having a bad day?
- Intentionality – healthy doesn't happen by accident often
- Policies

Tools


- Proactive approach to conflict resolution
- Two-way communication
- Intention gathering of employee feedback
- Policy generator handbook (dashboard)
- Work/life balance
- Respectful communication
- Building leadership capacity throughout

Small Group Work

As we discussed at the beginning the 8 factors are spokes on the wheel—all are needed.

In a breakout group discuss:

What are some actionable steps that you can take in the **next few months** to create an environment that optimizes employee performance/success. If you have long term actions, write these down for next year.



How *You* Fit
Into the Mix



Video Link: <https://youtu.be/YeiNYmeIPms>

A man and a woman are shown in a rustic, dimly lit interior. The man on the left wears a grey baseball cap, glasses, and a dark t-shirt, smiling at the camera. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket over a red top, looking slightly away from the camera. In the background, there is a red fire extinguisher on a wooden post, a white microwave on a counter, and various wooden beams and shelves. A framed picture is visible on the left wall.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/c0vf2IJzlwk>


Alex Chase

Resources

- <https://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/welcome>

The Farm Labor Dashboard






About Resources Tools Events My Account




Tips, Tools, and Techniques

to effectively recruit, hire, train and retain workers




Good decision-making around the type and amount of labor needed on a farm enhances the farm household's quality of life and increases the likelihood farmers will successfully meet their financial goals. This site provides tools and strategies to help small and medium-sized produce and diversified livestock farms make informed labor decisions.



 Are You Ready to Hire? Self Assessment	 Employee Cost Estimator	 Job Description Generator	 Personnel Policy Generator	 Resources
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THE FARM LABOR DASHBOARD IS HOSTED BY:

 EXTENSION

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS:

 Extension  CENTER FOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS  PennState

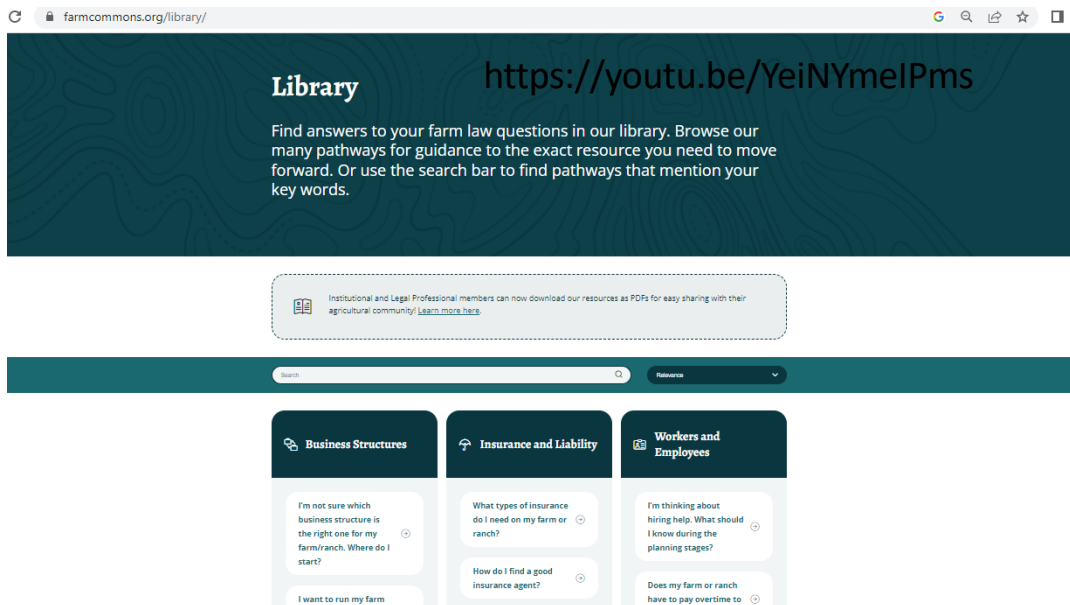
 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

 **USDA** National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under awards 2021-49400-35641, 2018-70127-28588, 2014-69006-21873 and 2018-69006-28196.

Resources

Farm Commons Website:
<https://farmcommons.org>



Farmers who would like to become a Producer Member can use the coupon code **UNHCE20** for 20% off for their first year. The coupon expires on 9/30/2023.

The Farm Labor Dashboard

uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard

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