

Staff Engagement

Employee engagement is about having staff that are committed to and enthusiastic about their jobs and the business. Engaged employees are more productive, they are less likely to have accidents and more likely to stay with their employer.

Engagement – Self Assessment

You can assess where you are by thinking about the following questions:

- Does everyone know where we are heading as a company and what matters most to helping us get there?
- Does everyone know their role; do they have the tools/resources to do their best in that role?
- What activities have we done to increase the knowledge base of the team?
- Do employees have a voice and are those voices heard by the management team?
- Are we maximizing the unique talents of our team members?
- What is the trust level between management and team?
- Have I spent time individually with each employee the past four to five months to discuss these things?



Key 'drivers' of employee engagement:

1. Clarity

Clearly communicate what's expected of employees. Communicate what your farm's values are and how the operation defines success. Be sure to communicate your expectations and to do it often.

2. Involve your staff

Involving your people is about keeping your employees informed, about what is happening on farm and why, and about seeking their input into decision making.

Give your employees autonomy to lead projects that will affect the business. This allows employees to grow their knowledge and experience while adding variety in their work from their day-to-day responsibilities.

3. Build a stronger team culture

An engaged team is more committed to results, so that everyone works towards a common goal, the success of the business.

Foster good working relationships amongst the team and build an environment where it's okay not to be perfect.

Build a culture where everyone's strengths are recognised, and flaws are enjoyed.

Show interests in your employees - especially their goals, their stressors, what excites them and how they each define 'success.'

4. Motivation

Creating new growth opportunities and help an employee feel noticed.

Employees are looking to continuously learn and gain knowledge. It benefits the farm when employees have more perspective on what is going on in the industry and what other progressive farms are implementing. Consider sending them to industry seminars, tradeshows, and workshops.

Reward and recognize employees in ways that are meaningful to them and celebrate both accomplishments and efforts to give employees working on long-term goals a boost.

5. Tools and Resources

High performing employees have the tools and resources needed to succeed.

Higher employee engagement results in:

Increased employee productivity:

Engaged employees emotionally connect with their work. This commitment to work increase productivity and the quality of work.

1. Rise in profitability

Contented employees enjoy their work and increase the profit of the farm

2. higher employee retention

Happy and engaged employees do not leave the farm easily. They work for their fulfillment and self-actualisations.

3. reduced absenteeism

Engaged employees love their job and rarely take unplanned leave because they are team focused.

4. greater employee wellbeing

Actively engaged employees have emotion free stress, that in turn maintains a happy work-life balance

5. Employees satisfaction

Employees who are satisfied with the jobs tend to be loyal and help the company to weather any storm.

How to start the engagement process

1. Introduce weekly farm staff meetings. Meetings are very helpful for communicating important information, finding out what's happening, seeking employees' ideas and fostering a positive team culture.
2. Review your rostering system. How many hours are people working on average a week? How many days off do they have? Talk to staff about how the roster works for them and how they feel about their work-life balance. Great employers will aim for a maximum average of 45 working hours per week and a minimum of 3 days off every fortnight.
3. Introduce a performance management system. Ensure that employees have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and the skills, knowledge and support needed to achieve these expectations. The most successful systems are simple ones – ongoing coaching and mentoring, frequent "10 minute chats", monthly catch-ups and formal review meetings once or twice a year.
4. Invest in training and development. Coaching, mentoring and on-the-job training are one of the most effective methods of developing your people. Take the time to share your experiences and insights, match new staff with a buddy, and encourage all employees to attend relevant farm discussion groups. Budget for external courses and formal qualifications, they are well worth it in terms of staff productivity and retention.
5. Involve your staff. Ask their opinions, listen to their ideas. Their participation is essential for creating a positive workplace culture.
6. Recognise and reward staff for a job well done. Make a special effort to reward those who go the extra mile.
7. Consider how people's jobs can be made more interesting. Daily tasks on the farm are not always interesting or exciting. Try to provide as much variety as possible e.g. job rotation. Foster a positive team culture through shared meals and social activities outside work.

