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#24



## HIRING? *HOW DO YOU FIND THE BEST FIT FOR YOUR OPERATION?*

We hope planting season went well, and wish you a productive summer as you transition into spraying, haying, keeping irrigation running, and moving grain!

Just because planting is done doesn't mean there is a shortage of things to do yet. As we have talked to producers over the years, one common issue we hear is the ability to find quality hired help to get those things done. For this month, the accompanying article was recently published on DTN and gives some handy tips when it comes to looking for hired help.

Best Regards,



**KEITH KNUDSEN**  
PRESIDENT/CEO | SECURITY BANK

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## AVOID HIRING PITFALLS ON YOUR FARM *by Lori Culler, DTN Business Adviser*

Whether you have two employees or 20, you probably share the same ill feeling when it comes to hiring people. As farmers we are innovative, determined, hardworking and we pride ourselves on our family values, and we are simply looking for individuals like us. So why is hiring so painful? Working closely with farms across the states from Washington to Florida and all the Corn Belt states in-between, we have identified the most common hiring mistakes farms make.

### TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

Yes, it would be great if your new all-star employee came walking through the door with five-plus years of combine operating experience, strong mechanical ability and



lived within a few miles of the farm. Unfortunately, that scenario is rarely reality. The best farms look at transferrable skills, hiring from within other areas of agriculture and outside of the industry. We've seen excellent hires with military, construction and forestry backgrounds coming to the table with heavy equipment operation, mechanical ability and the right work ethic.

When it comes to job postings, we often see companies making the job qualifications too restrictive. If you are open to other backgrounds that are relatable, let it be known in your job advertisement. We don't want high quality candidates not applying because they don't meet one of the qualifications listed that was really only a wish list item in your mind.

Some ag companies have taken transferrable skills to a whole new level. We've seen Budweiser reps become sales agronomists and sergeants in the military become farm managers. Be open to what traits you are looking for and what types of individuals might be able to bring those traits.

### LISTEN TO YOUR GUT

Early on in my human resources career, I relied too heavily on the experience and skills listed on a resume. Now, 15 years later, I'm relying heavily on personality traits, demeanor and behavioral tendencies along with prior experience to screen potential hires. Because most farms do not hire all the time, often they don't trust their own gut when interviewing.

From your own human interactions over your lifetime you have developed an instinct in reading people. If you're interviewing a guy in the shop and his responses are a little slower and his movements are a little slower, he is not going to start on the farm and all of a sudden pick up the pace.

Have your eyes wide open when hiring and watch for how they word responses and what their body language says. It's the minor details and one-line comments that show the full picture. Make sure to ask plenty of follow-up questions and explore all areas with each candidate. If you're hesitant on someone, there is typically a reason, even if you don't know it yet. Explore until you do.

### BE TRANSPARENT

A friend of ours recently took a new position. He was told they typically don't work on Saturdays. His first week on the job he was asked to work Saturday, which is not a big deal until he spoke with a few others that said they have been working Saturdays every weekend for the past six weeks.

That doesn't start off the employment relationship well. You need to work hard to be transparent with candidates on what to expect when working on your farm.



Walk them through the hours required by season. Discuss what your work culture is and what values the team shares. If it makes sense, give your final candidate some time with one or two of your current employees so they can ask questions and get to know the team.

It's worth the time investment to ensure there is full transparency before an offer is made. This will significantly improve the chances the new hire will be a long-term employee.

### MORE CANDIDATES

In order to be selective, we need to have a pool to be selective from when you hire. Word-of-mouth recruitment may bring you one or two candidates at best. That's not enough candidates for you to be picky on your hire. If your candidate pool isn't at least five or more people, then more effort is needed to build up that pool. With today's technology, job advertising and social media are great tools to build your pool.

If you only leave this article with one take-away, interview your top candidate at least twice. During the second interview, you will confirm how strongly you feel that person is a great fit or be pleasantly pleased you dodged a bullet you almost didn't see coming. Candidates are typically much more comfortable during the second interview and their true personality will show.

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