

Employee Management Best Practices

Recruiting, managing, and retaining employees at a rural grocery store can pose unique challenges. This fact sheet outlines some best practices to maintain a successful and motivated store environment. The content provided in this factsheet was provided by Cindy Welch, co-owner of Malay's Market in WaKeeney.

Best Practices for *Recruiting Employees* to a Rural Grocery Store

Start from within:

- Offer open positions to people already familiar with the work environment of your store.
- Offer current employees an opportunity for advancement within the store.

When you need to look for help beyond the store, recruit from complementary industries:

- Offer employment to people with experience in related industries, such restaurant and nutrition.
- Employing people from complementary industries often means they can add their own experience and new insight to your preexisting store offerings.

Share position-related information via word of mouth:

- Share open positions with current employees. Word of mouth travels fast within smaller communities.
- Mention the position to trusted members of the community and ask for recommendations on potential employees.

Make your store a desired workplace:

- Make your store a desired place of work by establishing a positive reputation within the community.
- Ask yourself, "What can I do to make my store a more desirable workplace compared to my competition?"

Best Practices for *Managing Employees* within a Rural Grocery Store

Store leadership sets the tone:

- Negative attitudes (often non-work related) change the tone for the entire work environment.
- Managers carry the ability to make or break a positive and desirable work environment.

Managerial responsibilities often carry on outside of the store:

- Create a manager-employee relationship that allows employees to feel comfortable asking questions.
- Create an environment in which employees feel comfortable contacting management when problems arise.

Acknowledge mistakes as learning opportunities:

- Everyone makes mistakes. Rather than scolding an employee for an error, use the mistake as a learning opportunity.
- Provide a supportive environment that allows employees to be open to learning without fear of consequences.

Train your employees in a way that represents the store best:

- Provide your employees with the guidance and tools needed to be confident in front of customers.
- Allow an employee to experience a year (all seasons) of on-floor training to be fully prepared for a managerial position.

Cross-training allows the store to be adaptive and responsive to unanticipated needs:

- Areas that all employees should know: register, floor, date inspection, truck unloading
- Special training: meat, produce, ordering/managing restock

Best Practices for Retaining Employees within a Rural Grocery Store

Acknowledge the effort of employees:

- Treating employees with dignity, respect, and care will be reflected in the care that employees have for their job and the store.
- Try your best to get to know your employees and work with their scheduling and job needs.

Provide opportunities for growth and development:

- Provide your employees with the opportunity to grow within the company.
- Implement a protocol for pay increases and incentivize employees with the possibility of higher pay (more skills = higher pay).

Allow employees to work as a team:

- Working together ensures more accountability and a competitive spirit among employees.
- Employees also have the opportunity to learn from one another, especially when one employee is more experienced than the other.

Develop the skills and expectations of student employees:

- As one of their first jobs, your store sets their expectations as an employee moving forward.
- Keep student employees eager to learn by challenging them with new tasks and opportunities to hone new skills.

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