



Working to Save Our Rural Grocery Stores One Challenge at a Time

Challenge Four: Dealing with Labor Issues

For the rural grocery store owner, finding good help is vital to the survival of the store. Yet finding quality labor can be a challenge. In rural communities, there is often a lack of qualified or committed people to work at the local store. Still, labor represents a significant portion of a store's controllable expense and is especially important for rural grocery stores where customers get to personally know the employees and the job they do. If store owners cannot find quality labor, it means: (1) store owners will have to spend more time at their store, (2) owners will devote more time hiring and training new employees, and (3) customer service will likely suffer. It is critical then for rural grocers to find individuals who can do the job, who are dependable and care about the quality of their work.



Solutions

The rural grocery labor issue is one of those wicked problems that is difficult because the problem is caused by so many different issues. Still, there are some things that can be done. Hiring the right kind of employee solves numerous labor issues. This may mean increasing the pool of potential job candidates to include senior citizens or applicants from a slightly expanded geographic area. Many stores use employee incentives to instill company loyalty. Also, continual training in customer service is valuable. Find more information about these solutions on our web site: www.ruralgrocery.org.

*K-State's Center
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Fast Facts:

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, young workers ages 16 to 24 hold one third of all grocery store jobs.
- The percentage of Kansas' population classified as youth is expected to decrease from approximately 30 percent to 27 percent in a ten-year time period— U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- According to an AARP survey, half of Americans ages 50 to 70 say they are interested in taking jobs that will help improve the quality of life in their communities.

Kansas Best Practices:

In addition to paying competitive wages, Tom Floersch, owner of stores in Seneca (pop. 2,100) and St. Mary's (pop. 2,200) says that he pays close attention to the personal as well as the work life of his employees. He says it's important to balance both the work and personal lives of his employees.