



NUFFIELD
Farming Scholarships



TEAMS

Recruiting and retaining great people
in farming and agribusiness;

A Bitesize Guide

INTRODUCTION

Each year, 20 people under 45 are selected as scholars and sponsored by the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust to travel, research and report on subjects they are passionate about and which contribute to advancing farming, food, horticulture, and rural industries.

These studies bring new thinking, technology or management approaches from across the globe to the UK. While many know of Nuffield Scholarships, few farmers are aware of the huge knowledge base of global reports, dating back to 2006, that can be accessed via the online Nuffield library.

This Bitesize Guide, supported by the Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust and the Royal Agricultural Society of England, gives an insight into the practical farming experiences and research freely available at:



<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/reports>



WHAT IS THIS GUIDE, AND HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

'Teams – recruiting and retaining great people in farming and agribusiness' is a subject which doesn't always receive the attention it warrants in our sector, but finding the right people, and keeping them, is key for any successful business.

This Bitesize Guide provides some guidance and advice to tackle the issue, providing ideas and inspiration to help find and keep top performers. It's designed to bring together key findings, discussions and recommended actions from relevant Nuffield Scholarship reports, all highlighted as 'Talking points', as well as featuring thought-provoking case studies - 'In practice'.

Each 'Talking point' or 'In practice' section includes a TinyURL link and QR code to access the relevant Nuffield Farming Scholarship report for more information, case studies and discussions.

The Bitesize Guide is designed to be a quick and inspiring guide which you can think about and put into practice when looking for and developing your farm or agribusiness team.



TALKING POINT 1:

The cost of replacing people

John Millington, NSch 2013



How much does it cost a business to replace a member of staff? The PeopleSmart website, run by DairyNZ, has a Turnover Cost Calculator to demonstrate how important staff retention is for the bottom line.

THE FORMULA IS BASED ON SEVERAL ASSUMPTIONS:

- The loss of productivity equates to 19 weeks of the employee's salary.
- The loss in knowledge and skills equates to six weeks of the owner's salary.
- The owner's time engaging with new staff equates to six weeks of the owner's salary.
- The cost of errors by new staff equates to four weeks of the owner's salary.
- The time spent on tasks not performed to standard expectation, which equates to two weeks of the owner's salary
- On-farm training costs equate to two weeks of the owner's salary, and;
- The on-farm recruitment process equates to one week of the owner's salary.

A worked example with an average farm salary of £28,000 and owner salary of £42,000, suggests that the average cost of one staff position turnover is a whopping £34,577. This total is the equivalent of one year and three month of salary for an employee.

In addition to the cost calculated, the formula totals a time input of 19 weeks in lost effectiveness of the position, and 21 weeks of time input into the new employee from existing experienced staff.

NZ consultants said if business owners had a better grasp of cost involved in losing a person, they would almost certainly work harder at developing better work relations with the people they employed and work out problems as they arise, rather than waiting until the working relationship had become untenable.



John Millington, NSch 2013 <https://tinyurl.com/2kx965t2>



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TALKING POINT 2:

Are you an employer of choice?

Richard Hooper, NSch 2009



Are you an 'employer of choice'? If you are then job applicants seek you out. They have heard that your business is good place to work. They choose you before you choose them. You may have a waiting list of interested employees. That this should happen in agriculture may sound difficult to believe to some people, but it can.

IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE YOUR BUSINESS IS LIKELY TO OFFER SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Training and development opportunities
- A safe and healthy working environment
- Positive employer-employee relationships
- Reasonable job demands
- Competitive pay and benefits
- Employee communication and influence
- Personally rewarding work
- Job security
- Thoughtful job design

A study involving 80,000 managers from 400 companies asked the question “What makes a great workplace?” Each company was considered ‘great’ if it demonstrated strengths in four key areas:

1. Employee retention
2. Customer satisfaction
3. Productivity
4. Profitability

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The research resulted in identifying 12 criteria of a great workplace, written from the perspective of an employee:

1. I know what is expected of me at work
2. I have the equipment I need to do my work well
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best, everyday
4. In the last week, I have received recognition or praise
5. My supervisor seems to care about me as a person
6. There is someone at work who encourages my personal development
7. At work my opinion counts
8. The purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important
9. My associates are committed to doing high quality work
10. I have a best friend at work
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow

If any business would like to know how it rates in the eyes of its employees, it should ask its staff to evaluate it based on the above 12 criteria. Then, be prepared to act on what they learn.



Richard Hooper, NSch 2009: <https://tinyurl.com/ysyrbtn2>



In practice: Having a vision for your business

Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015

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Developing a vision for a large company and being able to communicate it to all might be essential, but is it necessary on a small farm?

Gerjan Snippe is a 2015 Nuffield Farming Scholar who runs an entirely organic fresh vegetable producing farm in the polder area of Holland. Originally from a dairy background, in 2005, in partnership with two other farms, he set up Bio Brass.

Each year he grows 200ha of organic salads/brassicas in a rotation spread over 2,000ha of organic land in cooperation with four other farmers, and with a minimum break of six crops. His vision is very much consumer focused, building backwards from the consumer to the field, a concept he learnt from farmers in the UK. He is passionate about promoting ‘balanced farming’ - a sustainable model not dependent on outside suppliers (e.g. potash, nitrogen) with the label of ‘organic’ meaning professional and good, rather than a cliché of woolly socks and sandals.

I visited his new ‘consumer experience centre’ that they are developing to showcase their produce, their values and their demonstration area - essentially aiming to sell the crop rotation!

The point I took away was the degree to which the vision of the owners was integral to the nature and direction of the business and that staff could, and did, buy into that concept. Motivation therefore was not necessarily driven by money or likelihood of promotion. Assistance from outside consultants had been sought to run staff appraisals and to ask difficult questions not always easy to raise in a close-knit workforce.

Good businesses have a clear vision, and that inspires their staff. The vision drives the recruitment policy and focuses staff training and appraisals.



Good businesses have a clear vision, and that inspires their staff”



Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/5cwwdpbs>



TALKING POINT 3:

What does good look like?

Laura Savage, NSch 2015

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Take the time to ask Why, What and How?

- Why would people want to work for your business?
- What do they want to get from working there?
- How can you help them?

By helping them to get what they want, whilst they help you to do the work you need them to do, it will create a mutually beneficial working relationship.

What does a good employer look like? Lots of time is spent analysing the right employees required for businesses, job descriptions, recruitment profiles, essential and desirable criteria, recruitment and selection criteria. How much time is spend ensuring your business is somewhere your 'ideal' candidate would like to work?



Laura Savage



How much time is spend ensuring your business is somewhere your 'ideal' candidate would like to work?"



Laura Savage, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/yc3kw5e4>



In practice: Being an employer of choice

Alexa Parker, NSch 2018



Throughout my study tour I heard farmers talk about how they aspire to be a 'preferred partner'. This may be with a customer, a supplier, their partners in a business or even how they attract new employees.

For the Pye Group in New Zealand, which runs several dairy units as well as an arable business and feeds business, being a preferred partner is part of their strategy. They value relationships and people; it's at the top of their agenda. They know this must be number one if they are to have a chance of achieving their goals.

Their language told me a lot, they talked about respect in the industry and in their local community. They had an understanding of the impact they have on other businesses and the environment. This told me they had morals. They cared.

Their hard work and commitment to their reputation was evident. One of the biggest issues family run farms face is finding and retaining good employees. The Pye Group's reputation had them lining up. There was a known joke that someone has to die before you can join the Pye Group. Their reputation made them the 'Google' of the farming industry in New Zealand.

Pye Group also uses their brand to show consistency and build trust. For example, they developed a website, they took time to join up the branding and have logos on buildings, shirts, machinery – wherever they saw opportunity. It created a community and moved them beyond just being a family business. The brand was its own individual identity and each member of the Pye Group thought about how they could look after that identity, family member or not.



One of the biggest issues family run farms face is finding and retaining good employees. The Pye Group's reputation had them lining up."

Alexa Parker



Alexa Parker, NSch 2018: <https://tinyurl.com/45h963vy>



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TALKING POINT 4:

Return on investment in training

Laura Savage, NSch 2015



The value of training can be difficult to measure and challenging to show the improvements or impact made as a direct result. This puts businesses off investing in it, but by following some key steps it's possible to set up a training programme to address the needs of your business:

1. Engage with a training professional to conduct a full business needs analysis to work out the areas of the business that require improving, refreshing or introducing.
2. Once needs have been decided then a measure of these in their current state, be it a tangible or objective rating, to understand the starting point. Where possible this can be linked to existing performance measurements.
3. Set success targets to work towards alongside the training plan.
4. Set and implement training plans which can be designed by the training professional, including type of training, who for, timescales, numbers, level, length and depth of training to meet the needs identified above.
5. Evaluate the impact during and post-training, considering what trainees tell us in training evaluation, testing, response to training, reaching set target objectives.
6. Where possible define improvements in measurable value, be it in efficiencies, cost savings performance improvements, customer satisfaction surveys or other measures of success suitable for the business.



Laura Savage, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/yc3kw5e4>



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In practice: Put aside £1 a day for training

Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015

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If you train them they might leave, if you don't train them they might stay.

“John Tully, Ballyduggan Estate, Loughrea, Ireland, is herd manager for a 600 cow unit, split over two blocks of 400 and 130 acres respectively. John was FBD Dairy Farmer of the Year, is an active member of the Dairy discussion group run by Teagasc and is very good at setting and monitoring the achievement of key performance indicators (KPI).

He has set up Dairy Relief Ireland as a dairy labour supply company. He mainly recruits by word of mouth, often while students are completing a college qualification. He recognises the high risk nature of the farming environment and sends staff on training courses like manual handling, risk assessments, etc, as well as the more practical subjects such as AI, foot trimming and grassland management. He also holds regular ‘toolbox talks’ on topics such as care of machinery, careful driving etc.

The use of toolbox talks - imported from his previous career in the construction industry - is a simple way of promoting a safe environment and better work practices simply, relatively informally and non-confrontationally but at the same time rigorously. It was great to see Health and Safety promoted so much as part of running the farm.

He also budgets 500 Euro a head for training, which as he points out, is a very small part of the overall wage bill. He stated you have to accept that some staff will leave after receiving training but the benefits of improved performance should outweigh the training cost.



The use of toolbox talks is a simple way of promoting a safe environment and better work practices simply, relatively informally and non-confrontationally but at the same time rigorously.”



Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/5cwwdpbs>



TALKING POINT 5:

Training and retention

Richard Hooper, NSch 2009



Staff retention doesn't just happen. It takes forethought to try and create an environment where somebody would want to come and stay. This also requires a plan and the recruitment plan is an important part of the retention plan. Each informs and impacts on the other.

ELEMENTS OF THE RETENTION PLAN ARE:

- Know why they came (or not!)
- Know why they stay
- Know why they leave
- Anticipate turnover triggers
- Know your options
- Measure and evaluate

POSITIVE PRACTICES THAT WILL BE PART OF THE RETENTION PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Orientation and integration
- Training and development
- Compensation and benefits
- Recognition and rewards
- Performance management
- Work life balance
- Employee communication and participation
- Manager training and accountability
- Saying goodbye

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The most successful businesses I visited carried out the positive practices really well, albeit differently. One of the most important things I learned was that little things matter to employees, often perceived as inconsequential by managers or owners.

At an individual business level, do not get hung up on having to pay high wages. From my travels I have seen that high wages will attract people but will not keep them for long if other factors in the workplace are not favourable. It is a case of considering what might be meaningful to them, and most do not actually cost that much. Be creative; you will soon find out what works for both you and your employees. Never underestimate the power of cake!



Little things matter to employees, often perceived as inconsequential by managers or owners.”



Richard Hooper, NSch 2009: <https://tinyurl.com/ysyrbfn2>



In practice: Training and the 70:20:10 model

John Martin, NSch 2011



New Zealand's Landcorp is state-owned, and runs 1.5m stock units on 376,000ha across 122 properties owned and leased. It has 600 farm staff, 75 admin staff and four training officers.

THERE IS A HUGE EMPHASIS IN PROVIDING TRAINING FOR ALL STAFF AT ALL LEVELS OF THE BUSINESS. THIS TENDS TO BE BASED ON THE 70:20:10 MODEL:

- 70% of training is on the job development to minimise time away from the farm
- 20% of training completed through feedback and mentoring
- 10% completed through off-farm training programmes.

Landcorp will pay the course fees for staff to undertake external training, but only when they pass and receive a recognised qualification.

Individual development plans for each staff member and exit interviews of leaving employees help Landcorp managers identify gaps in training provision, as well as other measures to support staff to maximise their skills and performance. Employees are encouraged to take responsibility to complete additional training that will provide skills which they can apply in their job. If a problem is identified with any staff member, their manager will intervene and provide one-to-one mentoring.

Within the Landcorp structure employees are constantly challenged to continue their development. A manager who was in the top 5% of the organisation ten years ago is now likely to be around the middle. After a further ten years they will probably have dropped to be in the bottom 10%. In order to combat this process of stagnation, an employee may be moved to another farm to work with different staff in another environment.



John Martin, NSch 2011: <https://tinyurl.com/3mbrk55w>



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In practice: Recruiting and retaining great people

John Millington, NSch 2013



Tauhara Moana Trust dairy farm, near Lake Taupo, is the home of sharemilkers Olly and Kim Gibberd. Cultural values on this Maori-owned land interlink with innovation, excellence and integrity.

The farm covers around 700ha with a further 200ha run-off block, and is close to 10km in length, and is milking 2,250 cows split into five herds.

Olly says: “We operate a system based on the four principles of honesty, communication, grass and water. We set clear expectations for our staff, and help them to develop their skills. Managing whole farm performance is not just about communicating expectations though. It is also about providing feedback to enable staff to perform to the best of their abilities.”

The farm staff team is headed by a manager who has five people working for him. Given the size of the farm and complexity of the infrastructure, experienced staff is preferred in the recruitment process. With the farm running at 290 cows per employee, compared to a NZ average of 220, everyone has to perform from day one to keep the operation running smoothly.

Kim says: “Outlining the expectations of the employer to a candidate is important, but it is also important to allow them to air their expectations of the job”. The interview process takes at least half a day, allowing the employer to ‘climb inside their head’. The existing team of staff are consulted after involving the candidate in a milking or other joint role, so that the team can determine if they think the person is up to scratch. A standard interview question sheet exists to ensure all the information needed is gathered and to ensure all candidates are treated equally. Only then is further follow-up questioning pursued.



Olly and Kim Gibberd

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In practice: The \$5 board

For staff at Tauhara Moana Trust dairy farm, the key performance driver and motivational tool is the ‘\$5 Board’. “Extra effort, above that required to do a good job, should be rewarded,” insists Kim. They record the nature of the excellence on the \$5 board under each staff member’s name, and the size of the bonus earned. Equally however, if performance dips below the expected level, fines are also recorded. These are especially errors that result in others within the team being inconvenienced and that add to the daily workload, such as leaving a gate open.

Only the sharemilker and the manager, who needs to be a good communicator according to Olly, can make such awards. Rewards are recorded in blue and penalties in red. Any reason for a penalty that is repeated results in a doubling of the incurred fine to encourage people to learn from their mistakes. As long as the staff member remains in employment until the end of the milking season they can then cash in their bonuses. These can be sizeable and are available at the start of what is typically a holiday season on the farm.

The culture in this business is to give people responsibility, but for them to have accountability for their actions. There is the opportunity here for staff members to be rewarded for individual effort and excellence within a team environment. The \$5 board is the starting point for the annual review, as it outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the previous year’s efforts of an individual.



The \$5 board – blue for bonus, red for deduction.

The labour force within the primary industries of the region works an average of 2,000 hours per person per year. A target of 1,850 hours worked on this farm is in place to help reinforce the philosophy of caring for their staff. This, coupled with the added incentive of free housing, provision of a work vehicle and of workwear, has helped them to become known within the area as a preferred employer.



John Millington, NSch 2013: <https://tinyurl.com/2kx965t2>



TALKING POINT 6:

Understanding people – EQ

Andrew Brewer, NSch 2013



Most businesses or professions would target applicants with a high IQ, over lower scoring alternative options. Often I heard when conducting interviews with employers about their staff: ‘They were top of their class but just haven’t worked out within our team’. Or: ‘They were hard to get along with, lacked motivation’.

The term EQ is far less well known, standing for Emotional Quotient and relates to Emotional Intelligence. The ability to express and contain our own emotions is important, but so is our ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Imagine a world where you couldn’t understand when a friend was feeling sad or when a co-worker was angry. Psychologists refer to this ability as emotional intelligence, and some experts even suggest that it can be more important than IQ.

This ability to understand co-workers’ or business owners’ emotions can, some believe, be an innate ability one is born with, while others believe it can be learnt. It is the ability to understand others’ actions or inactions.

Perhaps dairy business owners need more EQ to understand the signals from staff and people. Cow signals are a concept founded by Joep Driessen from Holland. It means understanding the behaviour of cows. He runs many courses on farm and online, most being well attended.

Would a similar course into the unspoken behaviours and mannerisms of staff or bosses be well attended as there would not be cows present, or the concept would not be thought of as agricultural? The need to engage the dairy industry in EQ as well as IQ cannot be underestimated.



Perhaps business owners need more EQ to understand the signals from staff and people.”



Andrew Brewer, NSch 2013: <https://tinyurl.com/3ydx9tpp>



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In practice: A unique approach to people

Laura Savage, NSch 2015



Morning Star has farms throughout California and is headquartered in Sacramento, California. It is the world's largest tomato grower for processed tomatoes, operates across three farms and has annual sales of about \$750million (in 2015), employing 2,500 people.

It operates in a way I have not witnessed on any other farm. Its philosophy in regard to company structure, direction, mission and values is unique among most businesses but even more unique in agriculture and horticulture.

MORNING STAR PHILOSOPHY:

- No human bosses, the only boss is the company mission
- No job titles apart from the one required by law – President
- No job descriptions
- No set start or finish times
- No-one can be sacked, they have to ask to leave
- Bonuses are asked for by staff on an annual basis via a one-page hand written letter
- Staff operate using a self-management approach
- Staff are given ownership to make the best decisions on behalf of the business
- Staff provide their own objectives
- Morning Star assumes all staff do the best they can with the information they have

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Morning Star pack house in Sacramento.

Each member of staff completes a Colleague Letter of Understanding (CLOU), which defines the following:

- Personal Commercial Mission, the processes for which they have ownership;
- The colleagues who are used as performance measures for each process;
- The colleagues to whom they are primarily accountable and Principles.

The missions of colleagues overlap, so in order to meet your mission you must negotiate and work with colleagues to help them meet theirs. That is the key to this method of management.

The other information provided to staff is very clear information on the cost of production and income earned for produce. Staff are encouraged to know what the costs are for their part of the business and the cost impacts of decision they make.

Therefore, each staff member is clear on their objective/mission, what the costs and income are, and the area given to be the able to do their job, so taking this into account and making the best cost-versus-income based decisions.



Laura Savage, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/yc3kw5e4>



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TALKING POINT 7: Coaching and mentoring

Holly Beckett, NSch 2015



Coaching and mentoring featured during my Nuffield Farming study in conversations with leaders as an effective way of developing people within their organisations. The leaders I met that were most forward thinking ensured the mentor and mentee were very clear on the objective or outcome to be achieved from the process.

The process of mentoring was that rather than someone describing an issue or problem and the coach giving their perspective or ideas on a solution, they would simply ask questions and try to guide the mentee to a solution that was within themselves.

The main advantage of this approach is that cognitively, the mentee solves the problem themselves; the neural pathways are created from problem to solution, and cemented in their own mind. Research shows that, this way, behavioural change is much more likely to happen with immediate effect and will stick! This increasing practice of ‘coaching’ is based on the relatively new neuro-scientific discovery of neuroplasticity, described in this report.

Enabling people to think for themselves, rather than dictating orders, can be incredibly effective for progressing people in their roles.

A GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION SURVEY SHOWED THAT COACHING IN ORGANISATIONS PRODUCED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

- Productivity increases (86%)
- People become more positive and experience improved self-confidence (80%)
- Improved relationships (73%)
- Improved communication skills (72%)
- Improved work/life balance (67%)

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My original thoughts were that I didn't have time to coach people through a questioning process - and dictating orders to them worked. On reflection during my Nuffield Farming study, I now see that giving more time at an initial stage of training can save time in the end as employees become more self-reliant, and increase their own responsibility and accountability.

To manage or coach in this way you need to develop a serious amount of patience and give time to the process. The hardest part is coming up with the right questions or, as a university lecturer I spoke with termed it, 'the golden question'.



Holly Beckett



Holly Beckett, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/4wbxzyh5>



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TALKING POINT 8: A career structure in farming?

Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015



In Ireland, at Teagasc's Moorepark grassland research centre, one concept I was introduced to was an education guide: 'Stepping Stones to a Career in Dairy Farming'. The panel lays out the suggested education and skills for each step.

Job title	Farm Assistant	Herd Manager	Farm Manager	Farm Business Owner
Desirable previous dairy farm experience	No or limited experience	2 years	3 - 4 years	5+ years
Formal education	Leaving Certificate, Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture	Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture - Dairy Herd Management	Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management or Level 7 or 8 degree (majoring in Agriculture)	Any of the previous qualifications: Level 6 upwards
Essential skills	Daily farm tasks - Livestock handling, Milking, Machinery and equipment operation, Farm maintenance / Fencing, Health and safety compliance	Milking operation, Stock husbandry, Herd health and welfare, Grassland management, Health and safety compliance, Work organisation, Task supervision, Herd recording / administration	Herd management activities - Farm administration and book keeping, Farm performance evaluation, Farm software applications, Staff supervision, Communication, Time management, Health and safety management	Herd management activities - Responsible for income and expenditure, Strategic planning, Opportunity analysis, Business management, Human resources and payroll, Negotiation, Health and safety management
Suggested informal education	Teagasc Open Days and farm walks. Applied skills training (e.g. milking skills). Read the farming press (beneficial in all roles).	Discussion groups, Technical conferences / events on grass management, breeding management, herd performance evaluation, Macra courses.	Business, Financial and human resources training in addition to constantly improving technical knowledge.	Business management and planning, Human resources, Personal development.
Suggested skills training for career progression	Milking operation, Stock husbandry, Grassland management.	Financial management, Farm performance evaluation, Staff supervision, Time management	Business management, Strategic planning, Opportunity analysis, Human resources management.	Team development and recruitment, Training and mentoring.

By linking the formal education provided by colleges to informal education and suggested skill training, it provides a career framework which individuals can take hold of, review progression and direct their learning. This framework is by no means unique (the 'DairyNZ Career Pathways' publication is fantastic) but is elegant in its simplicity of layout.



Christopher Padfield, NSch 2015: <https://tinyurl.com/5cwwdobs>



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In practice: A sense of belonging

Chris Manley, NSch 2021



Brazilian Nuffield Scholar Vanessa Chiamulera and her family farming business Grupo Morena run a 9,500ha farm with arable, beef, forestry and seed processing enterprises, employing 100 people.

Grupo Morena has been certified as a 'Great Place to Work', demonstrating a consistently good employee experience and high levels of trust and effective leadership. One of the clear similarities with the UK was the intense need to attract and retain the right people to work with farming businesses. This means that companies would provide good quality accommodation, transport, clean canteens and nutritious food for their employees. The sense of belonging was something that I don't think I have experienced on a farm before. Employees were passionate and thankful for what the farm had done for them and as a consequence they really took pride in the farm.

This attention to detail and eye for cleanliness was in evidence all around the farm. This sense of pride in the workplace was installed by adopting the Japanese Kaizen 5S Continuous Improvement Model for workplace excellence, shown in the below graphic.



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The owners also actively sought to involve employees in the leadership of the farm. Grupo Morena had realised that the people who worked on the farm had a better idea of what was going on a day- to-day basis than the management did, so they created a company competition where employees were invited to submit ideas and innovations which could improve how things were done on the farm. The business committed that they would select and implement a number of these ideas every year, with the people who suggested these ideas rewarded and celebrated.

Not all ideas were purely based on financial reward. One of the recent successful pitches was that the farm should make its own honey, which was distributed to employees on the farm and guests. This stood out as a small idea which created a great sense of community within Grupo Morena.



Chris Manley, NSch 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/4jyfz7kc>



In practice: Retaining long-term team members

Robbie Moore, NSch 2016



In New Zealand's North Island, Jim and Marilyn Law own Palliser Ridge, a 1,440ha beef and sheep holding in the South Wairarapa. The business had a clear vision to create and maintain a large scale 15,000 stocking unit for sheep breeding and finishing, and a beef finishing unit which has long-term sustainability.

Jim and Marilyn had children of their own, but they had non-farming careers and had not shown an interest in coming back to the farm. The Laws had a longer-term need, a strong CEO to sustain and grow the business. They employed Kurt and Lisa Portas, in their mid-twenties, and together they acted as joint farm managers, operating and running the farm.

The Laws wanted to keep Kurt and Lisa involved within their business as they could see potential. When a neighbouring block of 287ha came on to the market, Jim and Marilyn provided a personal loan to Kurt to finance 40% equity in a non-leveraged new company which then purchased the block of land. There is a long lease on the new block of land back to the main company at market rate. Kurt is paid a dividend from the new company which is sufficient for him to pay interest on the loan to Jim and Marilyn. They also have an agreement in place which states that the capital is repayable when Kurt is able. Kurt and Lisa are fully motivated and keen to press ahead with developing the business

THROUGH THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX, THE LAWS HAVE:

- Provided an opportunity for entry for Kurt into business equity and land ownership. Kurt would not have been given this opportunity through more traditional land tenure means.
- Given themselves and their main business of Palliser Ridge a very good chance of success by motivating an individual to hopefully secure its long-term sustainability.

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Jim and Marilyn Law with Kurt Portas (pictured centre) with the author, Robbie, and his fellow Nuffield Global Focus Programme Group on Palliser Ridge, New Zealand.



Robbie Moore, NSch 2016: <https://tinyurl.com/4er3yj2h>



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In practice: Growing employees – and dealing with leavers

Chris Manley, NSch 2021



Marius and Caro Maertens are arable farmers in Zimbabwe who produce tobacco for international markets. The region is known for producing some of the best quality tobacco in the world and it is cured on farm.

Marius' view of leading people was that you had to give employees the opportunity to grow in the role and their skills set. This in turn enhances your reputation as an employer who can develop individuals, meaning that motivated prospective employees will seek you out when starting their career.

The other thing that struck me about Marius' approach to leading people was that you had to embrace people leaving your business, and actually celebrate the success of an employee who has developed and become ready for a new role outside of the farm. Farm business owners can be protective of their employees, particularly given the challenge of recruiting people with the right skills and attitude. However, embracing this natural cycle of recruitment was actually a strength for the Mertens business, and enhanced their local reputation.



Marius Maertens



You have to celebrate the success of an employee who has developed and become ready for a new role outside of the farm.”



Chris Manley, NSch 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/4jyfz7kc>



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TALKING POINT 9:

Reaching a conclusion

John Millington, NSch 2013



“Retention of good staff and becoming an employer of choice is very desirable. The ability to be able to talk openly and effectively with the people that we employ is part of the route to achieving this goal. As a result of this Nuffield Scholarship, I have some key conclusions and recommendations:

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Communication from the top down is all about clarity of message and transparency of motive.
2. Set, manage and live up to expectations. Resolve any unmet expectations in a timely manner.
3. Making the time to communicate, and giving it a sufficient priority depending on its urgency, gives individual staff a feeling of calm and reassurance.
4. Business is not complicated. Select and employ really good people. Adapt a job for them if you really want them. Make the situation a happy one so that they want to exceed expectation.
5. A business is only as good as the employees within it, combined with their relationship with the owners.



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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Start at the beginning. Ensure that the business structure is in place that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team.
2. Conduct regular formalised staff meetings that are attended by all staff. Have an agenda and stick to it. Listen to the responses.
3. Plan ahead and create a weekly plan of the jobs ahead.
4. Create a reference point for employees to work from. This can take many forms including SOPs, a Farm Manual or IT system.
5. Give regular feedback to employees based on outcomes.
6. Talk regularly to a person close to you to ease any feelings of isolation.
7. Deliver on your promises to staff, from resource provision to personal improvement opportunity.
8. Construct a structured training programme with each staff member.
9. Look at whether an advisory board is right for you and your business.
10. Gather your thoughts, know your message and communicate with the public.



John Millington, NSch 2013: <https://tinyurl.com/2kx965t2>



IN SUMMARY

This Bitesize Guide, from the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust and RASE, provides a snapshot into the breadth and depth of reports available at



<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/reports>



The website also features reports from global Nuffield Scholars, including Australia, New Zealand, USA and Brazil. The reports are a rich source of inspiration, case studies and thought-provoking recommendations for agriculture.

Please get in touch at info@rase.org.uk if you have questions, comments or feedback.



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