



RECOMMENDATIONS DO'S AND DON'TS LIST



Recommendations for Creating a Positive Workplace Culture



Do

- **Understand that culture matters!** Culture sets the tone for how people treat one another and consequently signals to prospective employees what is valued within the organization. Culture can attract or discourage employees from seeking employment with the firm.
- **Decide what values will guide your operation.** Be careful yet deliberate about your priorities. These priorities then need to flow down through all parts of your organization, leadership, business strategy and employment policies.
- **Ensure that setting the tone for the organization starts at the top.** Leaders need to 'walk the walk.' Culture filters down from the very top, from your statements about vision and strategy through to the behaviour of top management.
- **Monitor and evaluate culture.** For culture to be successful, it needs to be more than a plaque on a wall or words shared by leaders. Organizations should continually evaluate their company culture to ensure that it is aligned with the intentions set by top management. Regular cultural audits where employees have input into their experience within the firm will help leaders ensure that their collective vision is on track.
- **Set a culture that includes every employee.** As an employer in Canada, you have great opportunity to draw from the diversity within this country. In order to reap this benefit, operations need to ensure that there are places that are welcoming of all employees and that your organization values broad-ranging contributions.



Don't

- **Don't set a culture and forget about it.** A static culture does not take into account the rapid rate at which business and the world change. Ensure that you are constantly reevaluating your cultural priorities and that you are deliberately strategizing ways to share your vision with those around you.
- **Don't forget to align your HR policies with your culture.** All of your efforts to support and guide your people should be grounded in your culture. For instance, you want your cultural vision to determine how you orient new employees to the firm. Employees, both new and longstanding, should understand the culture of the firm as a guidepost for the operation's priorities.
- **Don't let a culture develop haphazardly.** Culture should develop following a careful process of deciding on priorities, planning and setting goals. If you let a culture develop on its own, you might end up with a culture that you don't want, or no discernable cohesive culture at all!
- **Don't forget about employee onboarding.** The best way to support employees for a successful transition into the firm is to onboard them deliberately and purposefully in a way that is aligned with your culture. This is your opportunity to ensure that employee expectations are set appropriately and to engage them through the values of the firm.
- **Don't work in silos!** In order to share cultural values, employees should be encouraged to collaborate and work across departments. Exposure to people across the whole firm will help culture spread.





Recommendations for Being an Effective Leader



Do

- **Leadership style depends on many factors.** Different people are motivated by different leadership styles and different situations may require different leadership styles. There is not one best leadership style. Leaders can be Directive (they simply tell their employees what to do), Participative (they involve their employees in decision-making and seek input), Encouraging/Supportive (they provide resources, support and feedback) or Achievement Oriented (they focus on setting and achieving goals). Which one of these styles is best depends on who you are leading and what motivates them, their position, your strengths as a leader and the culture, structure and strategy of the operation. Which leadership style is best? It depends!
- **Recognize that in some situations, workers will be more motivated by a visionary, charismatic leader,** whereas in other situations, workers will be motivated more by a transactional leader, someone who provides clear expectations and feedback on performance.
- **Spend time to understand what leadership style works best for which employees.** Have conversations with your employees and ask them what motivates them in order to understand the leadership style that would be most effective for them.
- **Understand how a given situation impacts which leadership style you should use.** Is there a time urgency or would a mistake be very costly? Then you likely need to use the Directive leadership style. Does your operation have an open-door culture and are employees empowered to make decisions? Then the Participative leadership style might be most effective.



- **Think about how the strategy of your operation will affect which leadership style you should use.** For example, the most effective leadership style will be different in an operation with a strategy that focuses on low cost, in which case you would likely use the Directive or Achievement-Oriented style versus one that focuses on customer service, where you would likely not use the Directive style.
- **Think about how the structure of your operation will affect which leadership style you should use.** For example, the larger your organization, the more difficult it becomes to use the Participative style. The number of levels and degree of bureaucracy in your operation will also affect which leadership style is effective (for example, the more levels and bureaucracy, the more likely the Directive style would be most effective).

Don't

- **Don't use the same leadership style in every situation.**
- **Don't assume that the leadership style you prefer is the same one that motivates each of your employees.**
- **Don't use the Directive style** and just tell an employee what to do if you think that particular employee likes to participate in decision-making or needs feedback and support to be motivated.
- **Don't use the Encouraging or Participative leadership style** if there is time urgency (for example, during harvest or planting season), or if it would be expensive if the employee made a mistake (for example, if there are high

input costs). In this case, you would want to use the Directive style and just tell the employee what to do.

- **Don't use the Participative style if you aren't going to consider the employee's input and suggestions.** They would feel frustrated if you asked them to participate in decision-making and then you didn't use their advice.
- **Don't use the Achievement-Oriented style if you can't clearly set goals and easily and objectively measure achievement on the goals.** It's not always possible to set goals in all positions. If you do use the Achievement-Oriented leadership style, involve employees in the setting of the goals, provide continual feedback on the progress of achieving the goals and set challenging but attainable goals.
- **Don't ignore the impact of your operation's culture, strategy and structure on which leadership style is most effective.** They are all important factors in determining which style you should use.





Do

- **Do make sure your hiring process is valid, which means it is based on an actual job description.** You can't have a hiring process that is fair and legally defensible if you haven't invested time in developing solid job descriptions (tasks required to do the job and the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities required). The interview questions should be job-related and based on the job description.
- **Do make sure your hiring process is reliable,** which means you are applying the same process and criteria to everyone that applies. From both a legal standpoint, and also to pick the best person, you need to ensure you are evaluating all of the resumes in the same way and asking everyone you are interviewing the same questions. You should also have a scoring system in place to score their answers to the interview questions.
- **Do make sure your hiring process is as free from bias as it possibly can be.** There

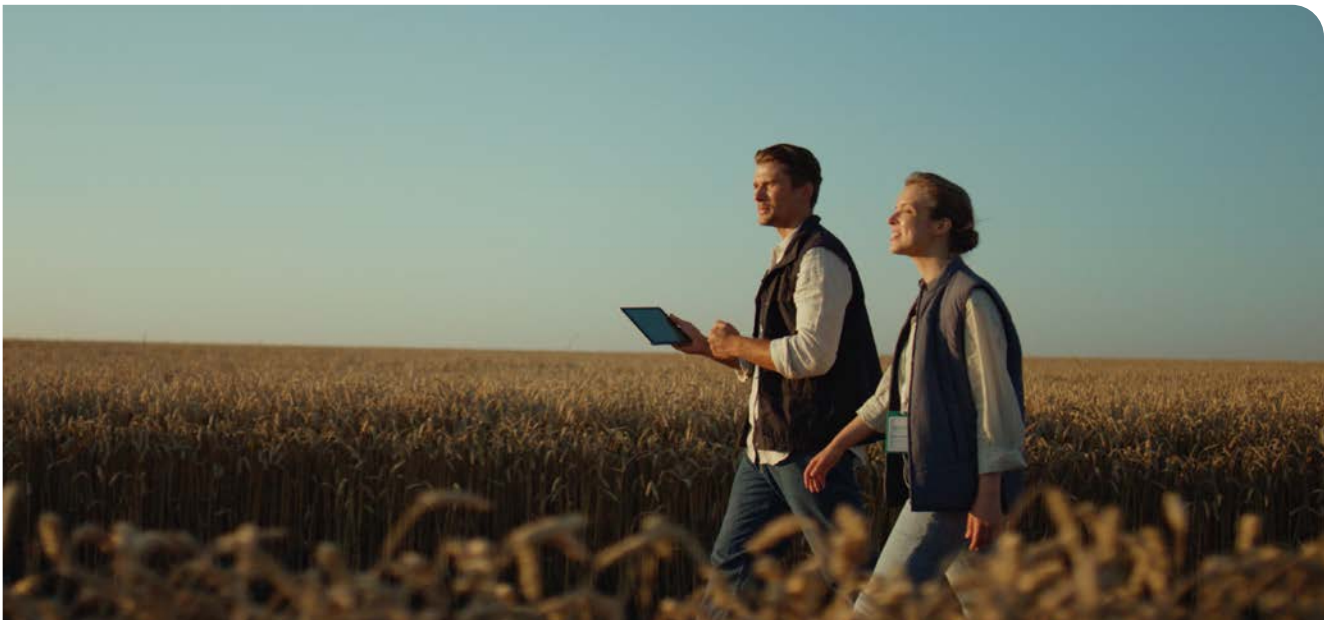
is a lot of potential bias when you are hiring someone; for example, you might be more inclined to hire someone who is similar to you (similar interests, values, characteristics). Or if the interviewer has stereotypes, they may be biased against people of a certain age, ethnicity or gender. Interviewers can be trained on what these potential biases are so that they are less likely to be biased through the hiring process. Bias can lead to people from marginalized communities and disadvantaged groups being discriminated against. From a fairness, ethical and legal perspective, it is very important that the interviewer isn't biased in any way.

- Having said all of this, you still need to **make sure your hiring process is practical, from both a cost and time perspective.** The CAHRC Agri-HR Toolkit has excellent templates and guides to help you to develop a job description and interview questions!



Don't

- **Don't ask random, open-ended interview questions that are not based on a job description.** It can really get you into trouble from a legal/discrimination standpoint and will not help you to hire the best person. It can lead to biases and stereotypes that you might not even be aware of.
- **Don't create interview questions without spending a lot of time writing up a solid job description.** Remember, the interview questions must be based on the job description in order for the interview to be legally defensible.
- **Don't use a different hiring process for different candidates for the same job.** You need to ask each person the same questions and evaluate the resumes in the same way.
- **Don't ever try to hire someone without:**
 - A solid job description that includes job tasks and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to do the job
 - Evaluating all resumes in the same way
 - Interview questions that are based on the job description
 - A scoring system for interview answers with criteria
 - Asking all potential employees the same interview questions
 - Thinking about whether it is more important to find someone who has the specific skills to fill the job or who fits with the culture of the operation





Recommendations for Onboarding New Employees

✓ Do

- **Invest the time in onboarding your new employees.** Make a plan and checklist of items you will include throughout the onboarding process.
- **If appropriate, set your new employee up with a mentor within your operation.** Ensure this mentor is someone who you value as an employee, as it is quite likely this new employee will model the behaviours of their mentor.
- **Conduct interviews or check-ins with your new employees regularly** (perhaps after the first week and every two weeks after that for a few months). Try to understand what they like and dislike about the job and make changes where necessary to reduce turnover. Create a culture where new employees feel like they can speak up if they aren't happy about something and come to you with any concerns.
- **Provide a realistic job preview when you are hiring them so that you don't have unmet expectations.** When you are going through the selection process, or even early on during the employment relationship, be open and transparent about what the job entails (the good and the bad)! If employees know what they are walking into, it will reduce turnover and increase motivation.
- **Remember that new employees can be committed in different ways.** They can have continuance commitment, which means they will stay because they have to (maybe they don't have another opportunity to go to), or they could stay because they have normative commitment, meaning they stay because they feel like they should stay. We don't want employees to have either normative or continuance commitment. We want employees who have affective commitment, meaning they stay because they want to and because they simply feel positively about the organization. A strong onboarding program with a mentor, a realistic job preview and time spent on socializing them into the company will result in higher affective commitment!



X Don't

- **Don't underestimate the importance of investing time in an onboarding program.** It will reduce turnover and increase motivation.
- **Don't choose the wrong person if you are going to set up a mentorship relationship.** The new employee will likely exhibit the same behaviours as the mentor you have chosen for them, so it is critical that you choose the right person.
- **Don't sugar coat things.** Provide a realistic job preview to new employees so they understand the good and bad about the job. Otherwise, you are wasting your time as things will not be as they expect them to be, and they are more likely to leave.
- **Don't ignore your employees once they start.** You need to check in with them regularly to understand how they are feeling and to understand if there are ways that you can improve things that aren't working. Create a culture where new employees feel like they can speak up if they aren't happy about something.





Recommendations to Motivate Your Employees



Do

- **Be mindful of the importance of fairness because it is very important to motivate your employees.** Employees can be motivated by three types of fairness. First, they can be motivated by distributive fairness; they feel that one is paid fairly relative to others. Second, they can be motivated by interactional fairness which means they feel they are treated with respect. The most important type of fairness when it comes to motivation is procedural fairness. Do your employees feel that HOW you make decisions is fair? It's not the outcome of decisions that is important, it's the procedures that you used to make the decisions.
- **Do spend time ensuring your decisions are procedurally fair.** Ask yourself whether each decision is made using a procedure that is representative of how your employees

would want you to make the decision. For a very simple example, think about how vacation time is allocated. Do employees think this process is fair? Have you asked them? It can apply to any decision you make as a manager. Who works what shift? Who works on which piece of machinery or which line? Who gets promoted? Who gets to go on training courses? Another way to ensure procedural fairness is to consistently apply the same procedure when making a decision for every employee. Also, ensure that your employees feel comfortable coming to you if they don't think a decision is fair, without fear of you judging or punishing them. Lastly, you need to be transparent and communicate HOW you are making decisions so your employees can see that you are being fair. Procedural fairness is extremely important in order to have motivated employees.



- **Do make sure your employees have a high level of self-efficacy, which is their belief that they can do the job.** It's different from self-esteem, which is an overall belief about yourself. Self-efficacy is job or task-specific. If an employee isn't motivated or performing well, you should ask yourself whether they have all of the tools, resources and skills to do the job and whether you have given them clear instructions.
- **Do talk to each of your employees to understand what motivates them.** Some employees are motivated by extrinsic factors, meaning they are motivated by pay, benefits, vacation and other tangible things. Others are motivated more by intrinsic factors, which are feelings from within like feeling satisfied, being challenged or feeling like they have accomplished something. It is important for you to understand which is more important to each employee so that you can manage them differently. For example, if one employee is more motivated by intrinsic factors then continual feedback is going to be very important. Whereas for an employee who is motivated by extrinsic factors, you are going to want to pay very close attention to ensuring rewards are given in a timely way, are tied to performance and that the employee feels valued. It gets tricky because you want to treat all employees fairly but differently according to what motivates them.
- **Do set goals with your employees.** However, you need to ensure that the goals are challenging but attainable and easily and objectively measured. The most important thing about goal setting is that you need to provide continual feedback on the progress on the goals.
- **Do recognize that your employees are constantly comparing themselves to other people,** both inside and outside of your organization. They will be comparing everything they bring to the job (their skills, education, attitude, effort, etc.) to what they get in return (salary, incentives, vacation, benefits, etc.). They then compare their perceptions on this to other people. If they feel others are paid more for the same effort and performance, they will not be motivated and they will stop working as hard. Individuals will use not only their co-workers within the company as comparators, but also people working in other organizations.





X Don't

- **Don't assume that all of your employees are motivated by the same thing.** Remember, some are motivated by feelings from within, whereas others are motivated by tangible things like pay and vacation.
- **Don't underestimate the importance of intrinsic motivators, or feelings from within.** Managers tend to assume that people are mostly motivated by money, and that often isn't the case.
- **Don't confuse rewards with reinforcers.** Rewards are provided to employees without being tied to anything; for example, a holiday bonus. Reinforcers, on the other hand, are rewards that are tied to performance (merit pay, for example). While rewards may increase employee engagement and morale, they do not increase motivation. Reinforcers, because they are tied to performance, increase motivation.
- **Don't hide how you make decisions.** If you are making decisions in a fair way, then communicate openly and transparently how you are making decisions.
- **Don't assume that if an employee isn't motivated or isn't performing well that it is necessarily because of something they are struggling with.** Look to the situation and to yourself as a manager to see what you could do better. Put yourself in their perspective and try to understand if they have clear instructions and all of the skills, resources and time to do the job. When someone isn't performing, managers typically assume that it is the worker's fault; this often is not the case, and it is actually because of external factors.





Recommendations for Conducting Effective Performance Appraisals

✓ Do

- **Ensure you are doing performance appraisals for all employees.** They are critical from both a motivational and also a legal perspective. It is not legally defensible if you are not formally documenting your employees' performance (for example, if there was a claim of discrimination with respect to a promotion or pay, you could be asked to produce the employee's performance reviews).
- **Ensure your performance appraisals are valid** (meaning the questions are based on the job description) and reliable (administered the same way consistently for every employee).
- **Provide continual feedback.** The performance appraisal should not be a discrete event. Rather, a manager should be providing continual feedback throughout the year so that there are no surprises at the time of the review, and it is more of a formality to sign off on the documentation.
- **Perform “stop-start-continues” with your employees.** Ask them what you as a manager can stop, start and continue doing to improve their job. Just by asking for their opinion, it will increase their motivation, and it often leads to conversations about things that can easily be improved upon. You can also reverse the exercise and also do “stop-start-continues” of your employees in the same exercise. Use the opportunity to tell them what you would like them to stop, start and continue doing.
- **Make a diary of your employees' performance.** When you see something you like or dislike, write it down. This will help when it comes time to conduct your performance review, as you won't be biased by the most recent thing that happened. It will help you to look more holistically at their performance over the rating period. Your employees will also feel valued because you took the time to document their performance.



- **Be mindful of the various biases that can occur in a performance review.** Rater biases affect the performance rating more than the employee's actual performance!
 - The halo effect says that if we see an employee do something good, we automatically rate them high on everything. It can also be the reverse and if we see an employee do something bad, we automatically rate them lower on everything else.
 - The similar-to-me bias says that raters will rate employees higher if they are similar to them in some respect (could be similar interests, education, gender, etc.).
 - The recency bias says that raters will remember the most recent thing the employee has done and it will affect the rating, while the primacy bias says that the rater may remember the first thing the worker did in the rating period, which in turn affects their overall ratings.
 - Some raters commit the strictness bias and rate everyone harshly, while others commit the leniency bias and rate everyone leniently. Most managers commit the central tendency bias and rate everyone right down the middle!
- **Do use CAHRC's AgriHR Toolkit to get started with performance reviews if you are currently not conducting them.** It is a great place to start with templates and suggestions!





X Don't

- **Don't ignore the importance of conducting performance reviews.** From both a motivational and legal standpoint, they are incredibly important!
- **Don't forget the importance of investing time in a job description.** The items you are rating your employees on will be based on the job description in order for the appraisal to be valid and legally defensible.
- **Don't just do performance reviews once per year, or even once every six months.** Continually provide feedback to your employees so that the performance review is not a discrete event.
- **Don't make the performance review a one-way conversation.** Use the conversation as an opportunity to ask your employee what you could stop, start and continue doing.
- **Don't rate everyone the same in the middle of the scale.** Take the time to think about any way that you might be biased towards an employee and try not to have that affect the rating you give them.
- **Don't just measure an employee's performance either subjectively (using scales) or objectively (using hard numbers such as number of sales, quality measures, etc.).** If you just use subjective measures (e.g. on a scale of 1 to 10, how often do you see an employee exhibit a certain behaviour), that can lead to a great deal of bias. On the other hand, you don't want to only use objective measures/hard numbers as it can feel frustrating to the employees if there are things outside of their control. You want to use a combination of both subjective and objective measures!





Recommendations for Effectively Training and Developing Your Employees



Do

- **When deciding which employees to offer training and development opportunities to, ensure you are choosing individuals in a fair and consistent way.** From both a legal standpoint and to motivate your employees, you need to have a fair procedure to determine who receives training and development opportunities. Also, this process needs to be applied consistently to all employees.
- **When training for new skills or processes, measure the success of training by increases in performance,** not by employee perceptions of whether they enjoyed the training or thought it was worthwhile. Training is only valuable if it increases the performance of your employees. It would be ideal to have some measure of performance before the training, and then to measure that performance a few weeks or months after the training to see if it was a success.
- **Use training and development opportunities as a strategic benefit to increase employee commitment to your operation and reduce turnover.** Think of it as a form of compensation for those who value upgrading their skills. It can help you to become an employer of choice and differentiate you from other competitors when it comes to recruiting your employees.
- **Before deciding what type of training and development opportunities to offer, conduct a needs analysis at the organizational level** (is training needed on the culture, values, mission, goals and strategy of your operation?), at the job level (is training needed on new knowledge, skills and abilities required for the job?) and at the person level (are there gaps between the knowledge and skills needed for the job and the employee in the position?)
- **Use your performance appraisal conversation as an opportunity to give feedback to the employee on what knowledge, skills and abilities could be improved upon and offer training and development opportunities that address them.** Also, use the performance appraisal conversation to ask your employees if there are particular areas where they would welcome training and development opportunities. You might be surprised to find out



they are interested in training in other areas of your operation!

- **If you are offering the training and development in-house, keep the learning principles in mind.** The following learning principles help people to learn most effectively: Participation – ensure the participants are actively involved in the training; Repetition – repeat the material as much as possible (research tells us we forget 50 per cent of what we hear immediately and 75 per cent of what we hear within two months; and of the 25 per cent we remember, only 60 per cent of it is correct); Relevance – ensure the material is meaningful; Transfer – make the training as similar to the actual job as possible (e.g. train in the same location, with the same coworkers) and Feedback (provide feedback to the learners on their progress). These principles will help to increase the likelihood that the employees will retain the information they learn!

Don't

- **Don't randomly choose who receives training and development opportunities.** In order to be legally defensible and not biased, you should have a procedure of deciding who receives training opportunities and when, and that procedure should be applied consistently to all employees.
- **Don't always assume there will be an upward learning curve when you train your employees.** Learning takes place in bursts and can plateau before it increases again over time.
- **Don't underestimate the importance of self-efficacy with respect to training.** Self-efficacy is the belief that someone can learn the skills that they are being trained and that they can

apply the skills to the job. It is different than self-esteem which is one's overall belief in themselves because self-esteem is job specific. After an employee is trained, you should ensure they have self-efficacy by asking them if they feel confident in applying the newly learned information or skills to their job.

- **Don't ignore organizational influences on the transfer of training, meaning the likelihood that they will transfer what they have learned to the workplace.** First, ask yourself whether there are rewards for demonstrating the new skills or behaviours. Second, are there environmental constraints or obstacles? (For example, is there a lack of equipment, tools, time, etc. that may prevent the employees from using their newly learned skills?) Also, ensure there is both supervisory and peer support for what was learned in the training. Training coworkers together can help to reinforce the behaviours with each other. Lastly, ensure you have a strong organizational learning climate where learning is encouraged, supported and rewarded.
- **Don't measure the effectiveness of the training based on the employees' reaction as to whether they were satisfied with it.** Instead, you want to measure the actual learning and whether it resulted in attitude or behaviour changes.





Recommendations for Effectively Compensating Your Employees



Do

- **Do tie some pay to performance. From a motivational standpoint, it is important that employees have some portion of their pay tied to performance (an incentive).** But it is also critical that those incentives are provided in a timely manner and are based on a fair and valid performance appraisal so that employees can make the connection between the incentive and their performance.
- **Do have incentives or merit pay that are based on a combination of individual and organizational performance.** If you only provide individual incentives, you will create a culture of competitiveness and people will look out for themselves. If you only provide incentives based on organizational performance, you will end up with some individuals being social loafers, meaning that they don't work hard because they know they will get the same reward as everyone else.
- **Do have an open and transparent pay system IF AND ONLY IF you have invested time into ensuring it is procedurally fair.** Have you spent time ensuring that the procedures to decide what job receives what level of pay are fair and valid? Ideally, if you have and you can communicate that process, it will greatly motivate employees because they can understand why they are receiving the pay that they are. If you don't have an open and transparent pay system that is procedurally fair, then employees will overestimate what their coworkers are being paid and it will affect their perceptions of equity.
- **Do ensure you have both internal equity and external equity.** Internal equity means that you are paying people fairly relative to each other within the organization. External equity means that you are paying your workers fairly relative to those in similar positions at your competitors. Your employees will constantly be comparing themselves to other people within the organization and in other organizations.



Don't

- **Don't have an open and transparent pay system if you haven't invested the time to ensure it is procedurally fair and unbiased.**
- **Don't randomly determine wages or merit pay.** In order to motivate your employees, the pay system must be structured and based on job descriptions, external wage rates and internal equity. Merit pay or incentives must be tied to a performance measure that is objective and free from bias. Employees must feel like both their wages and any merit pay are determined in a fair and equitable way.
- **Don't have incentives that are solely based on either individual performance or company performance.** It should be a combination of rewards that are tied to both individual and organizational performance.
- **Don't forget that your employees are constantly comparing themselves to others both within your organization and in other organizations.** If they feel like they aren't being paid fairly compared to someone else, they will not be as motivated and will not put in as much effort. Spend the time to analyze whether you are paying people fairly relative to each other within your organization, and gather data from other organizations.
- **Don't wait too long to provide incentives that are tied to performance.** Employees need to see the connection between the performance and the reward.





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