



The Farm Manager

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The Role of the Farm Manager

Many problems managing people can be avoided if the Farm Manager has a clear understanding of what managing people is all about. Put aside the notion of “boss” for a while and the idea that you run (or own) the farm and consider what your “role” is, as the Farm Manager.

A farmer plays many roles on a farm including general manager, owner, spouse, parent and neighbour. Each role is distinct, and the trick is to play the right role at the right time. Key components of a “role” include:

[1] The set of expectations between the Farm Manager and all the other “roles” the farmer interacts with. For example as the Farm Manager, your role will be defined in part by what others, including your employees, the banker and your suppliers expect of you – expectations such as support, clear direction and decisiveness. And conversely, as the Farm Manager, you have expectations from these people because you’re the Farm Manager – expectations such as respect for your authority, allegiance, honesty, a full day’s work, etc. Making sure everyone you interact with is aware of your expectations of them (and visa versa) is a key step to clarifying your role.

[2] Values and priorities also help to define a role. As the Farm Manager, what should you place high value on? The answer to this directly impacts your decisions and your managerial behavior. Should a Farm Manager place high priority on maintaining employee morale? productivity? profitability? personal accountability? objectivity? setting the example for others? Although many of these seem obvious they may conflict with the values demanded from your other roles such as parent or spouse. A clear role necessitates a clear understanding of the priorities and values required by the position.

[3] Relationships is the third component of a role. To play the right role means you need to be developing and maintaining the appropriate relationships with those you work with – and there are several different types of work relationships. A relationship with an employee, for example, needs to be a “boss/subordinate” relationship – objective, supportive and authoritative (not authoritarian). Problems always arise if this relationship is too familiar or inappropriate for the role. If an employee is also a close friend or family member and the relationship is perceived by others to be too close, you are seen to be playing the wrong role and resentment and distrust will follow.

The essence of a manager is someone who ensures that every member of the manager's team clearly knows what he or she is expected to do; and then the manager provides all the support required to make sure that each person is successful. Support includes the necessary skills and knowledge, the time, the self-confidence and self-esteem, the tools and materials and whatever else the employee needs for success. The Farm Manager's primary role responsibility is to support his or her employees and to make them all successful in their jobs. The success of each employee is the measure of success of the Farm Manager.



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