

Top Tips - Working with People

In these uncertain times it is more important than ever to have good communication with staff members. They are concerned about their own health and the viability of your business will affect them. Therefore talking is incredibly important.

- Sit down with them for a chat on a regular basis. It could be just with a cup of coffee mid morning. Check in with them and ask how they are getting on.
- Ask them if they need to change hours of working. They may have partners who are at home struggling with child care and it could be helpful for them to be able to help with that.
- Are they happy with the measures you have in place on hygiene and social distancing at work. Have they any further suggestions?
- Talk about the challenges the industry in general and your business in particular is facing. They will have heard that things are difficult through the media. Talking about it will help them and you. Discuss how the business could change to ride out these challenges. They may have some good ideas too.
- Talk about being key workers in this crisis. Explain their part in keeping the country going at this time. This is really important as there has been so much criticism of farming in recent years so many are feeling victimised, including staff. Therefore talking to them about how this has changed in this time of crisis will give them a boost. We all need to feel that what we do is important.
- Everyone needs to feel appreciated. Many of us are quick to criticise and slow to praise - it should be the other way round. In praising good practice you are likely to see more of it. Therefore a good rule is - appreciate 5 times more than you criticise.
- Communicate clearly what you are trying to achieve in your business. Staff are not mind readers! Set some key performance indicators. These are a few measures that are important to you. Let the staff help you set them and they will be more likely to work towards them.
- Remember people imitate what you do rather than what you say. Therefore you have to practice what you preach. For example if you talk about cleanliness as being important but don't follow through in your own actions the staff won't either.
- If you have to furlough staff get good advice about how to set this up. Then explain to the staff honestly why you are doing this. Be prepared to answer their questions. Arrange to keep in touch with them if they wish.
- Get the staff to help you put a contingency plan in place if anyone gets the virus or has to isolate themselves because a family member gets it.

Some general questions you may consider to get the best out of everyone.

Ask these questions often of your staff.

- What do you really think?
- At the end of your time here with us what do you want to say you achieved here?
- What needs improvement in this business that I haven't noticed. What would you do about it?
- What are we not facing that is in front of our face?
- How would your work have to change for it to be exactly right for you?



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