

Ulster Grassland Society

Conference
January 23rd 2018



Who is he?

- ▶ Me
- ▶ Farm Solutions
- ▶ Farmer owned
- ▶ Farm Services focus
- ▶ Started in 1977- 40 years ago
- ▶ Rapid Expansion mode in last 5 years specifically...why



Staff...

A headache or an opportunity?

Why do we do this to ourselves.....?



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Where to start...?

- ▶ Planning before doing
- ▶ Job specification, Person specification
- ▶ Define the work and the role
- ▶ Define the skills needs



Be realistic

- ▶ Responsibilities of the role
- ▶ Experience required
- ▶ Never going to have your ownership passion

- ▶ Bonus/ Incentivised
- ▶ Non disputable measurement
- ▶ Link with farm objective



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The labour market

- ▶ More difficult than ever before
- ▶ “Local lad” unlikely now
- ▶ Accommodation opportunity
- ▶ How wide to spread the geographical search?
- ▶ Understand the scarce market and have the right attitude



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Promoting your vacancy

- ▶ Many means- paper/ Magazine, On Line , Recommendations, Local knowledge...Farm Solutions
- ▶ Selection process -decide and stick to it
- ▶ Phone screening , on farm visit, reference check....



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Interview and farm visit

- ▶ It's a 2 way process- sell your farm job as an opportunity...is it?
- ▶ Be nice to poor applicants, be clinical on good ones.
- ▶ Don't assume
- ▶ Careful with discrimination questions
- ▶ Don't prejudge... listen and really see the person
- ▶ Traits sought- practical skills... but also determination, personal agenda, clarity, intelligence, people skills, livestock interest, motivation for applying for this job



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Decision

Consider... but do it quickly

Reference checks

Trial option?

Respect their decision also

Make that decision!



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Starting New Person

- ▶ Accommodation - ready and attractive
- ▶ Initial training
- ▶ Legal stuff done (inc pay signed off).
- ▶ Written Milking /Livestock Protocols-explain
- ▶ Written role and responsibilities
- ▶ Written Performance Measurement -explain
- ▶ Tone- Respectful, thoughtful, decent and clear.
- ▶ Allow time to get used to farm- reverse roles?



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Poor Performance

- ▶ Deal with it early
- ▶ Not opinion- facts to establish the problem
- ▶ Never **Personal** comments - stick to facts
- ▶ Calm and patience
- ▶ Listen...Listen....
- ▶ Agree a corrective action ...time line...come back to it
- ▶ End if no progress being made... watch law



What Motivates Farm Staff?

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Training and responsibility
- ▶ Appreciation and involvement
- ▶ Job security
- ▶ Wages
- ▶ Promotion and growth
- ▶ Good working conditions
- ▶ Mutual loyalty
- ▶ Tactful discipline
- ▶ Sympathetic help with issues



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Managing your people

- ▶ Motivate for performance (aggression doesn't work)
- ▶ Develop their skills- training as appropriate
- ▶ Atmosphere on farm
- ▶ Be realistic about their financial needs, not just your farms
- ▶ Deal with negative people unsettling the staff member
- ▶ Annual reviews



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Labour Shortages- Market issues

- ▶ Improved “careers” on farms- share farming ..ownership development, progression.
- ▶ Competitive Pay rate to similar skilled jobs elsewhere.(Less.. How low...)
- ▶ Immigration... from where, training
- ▶ Technology- will replace people ... more skilled people required but less routine / manual work
- ▶ Agric Colleges- outputs going elsewhere



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Final advice

- ▶ Approach it positively
- ▶ You only need one
- ▶ Build & protect your farms positive reputation
- ▶ Good staff - nice to be around and a resource for your farm busines



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