

Managing Employees With a Busy Family



**RED GRANITE
FARM**

ESTABLISHED 2007

Red Granite Farm Background

- Farm approximately 3 acres of vegetables
 - 30'x96' high tunnel
 - 1 acre of sweet corn, 1 acre of pumpkins, 1 acre of mixed other annual summer/fall veggies & fruits
 - Sell mostly at a farmer's market, but also have on farm hours
 - Small amount of wholesale/delivery
 - Culinary Classes



High Tunnel Production



Field Production



Red Granite Farm Background

- Full Service Garden Center specializing in Perennials, Shrubs, Succulents and Seasonal Annuals
 - Landscape Design Consulting Services
 - Potting Parties/ Succulent Pumpkin Classes
 - Junk Jaunt Vendors



Garden Center



Red Granite Farm Background

- Flock of 400 laying hens turned over each year, so have roughly 800 in the summer months
 - Most eggs are sold wholesale, requiring 3-5 deliveries per week
 - Majority of egg business is done by owners, not employees



Business Growth + Growing Family

- Started RGF in 2007 with small market garden, 2 full-time off farm jobs, Child #1, almost 2 years old
- In 2008 & 2009 we grew more and expanded each year, still 2 full-time off farm jobs, added child #2
- I quit my full-time job in 2010 with birth of child #3, and in spring of 2011, I started growing perennials, so we could sell product for entire 6 months of market



Farmer's Market in the beginning



Growing Business, Growing Children

- 2013- first growing season in the high tunnel and by Fall of 2013 the burn out was real
- We hired our first employee- didn't care what it cost, I needed my sanity
- Another student in 2014 for the season
- In 2015 we hired 2 employees- allowing more time for me to spend with the kids on summer break



It's all about BALANCE

- Hired 3 part time seasonal employees in 2016, 2017, 2018 & 2019
- Quit hauling perennials to the market in Spring 2017, started having more farm hours
- Expanded farm hours for Spring in 2019- once again hired 3 seasonal employees for 2020



Farmer's Market now



Growth is good...right??



Work Smarter,
not harder

Game changing business decisions

- Need to go to less markets, but make more \$\$ at each market
- Need more help to accomplish this
- Need a packing shed to have better quality and more product to sell (less waste)
- If I'm paying someone to harvest and make it market ready, it needs to sell
- Exploring other sales avenues



When to add an employee

Answer these questions:

- Will they be kept busy enough?
- Will we be more efficient?
- Will we be able to offer them an educational experience?
(especially if looking for a student intern)
- Will profits offset the expense?
- How much is your sanity worth?
- Can my aging body handle the physical demands of the farm?



Duties of Employees

- Water
- Weed/ Hand Cultivation
- Plant
- Transplant
- Help customers
- Monitor Irrigation
- Harvest Produce
- Clean and Package Produce
- Scout for insects, diseases
- Trellis and Prune Tomatoes in High Tunnel
- Display Garden Maintenance
- Restock Sales Area
- Perennial Maintenance
- Farmers Market set up and tear down
- Farmers Market Sales

Duties of owner/manager

- Chicken chores and egg washing/delivering
- Invoicing of Egg Wholesale Customers
- Accounting
- Marketing including social media & advertising
- Chemical Application
- Cultivation and Planting done with the tractor
- Ordering of plant material for garden center
- Landscape designs and consultations



Some considerations before hiring

- Can you give them guaranteed hours?
- Seasonal workers can be harder to get to come back year after year-make sure it's worth the extra effort
- Can you keep someone employed through the winter?
- Do you have appropriate facilities?
 - Public Bathroom
 - Break Room for eating lunch, place to cool off in the summer



Where to find employees

- Local Universities or Community Colleges
- High School Students- check with FFA chapters
- Post a job on Facebook
- Post a job with agencies that specialize in recruitment
- Ask your customers- some of my best “fill-in” employees were customers first
 - Perks to these “fill-ins” include that many will work for plants/produce
 - They can be there when you need “extras”, but don’t have to promise them a certain number of hours

Interview Process

- We take advantage of being so close to ISU and their students
- Attend Horticulture Career Night to gain resumes and talk to students
- Hand out a list of expectations of employees and an overview of RGF so they know what to expect
- Arrange time to interview them on campus
- Try to have everyone hired by January

Orientation/Training

- Expectations are outlined and provided to employee in writing
- Lots of learning by doing, side by side with me
- Food Safety Training is a priority for 2020
- Daily tasks are written out each day
- Weekly harvest schedules are posted each week
- Keeping one main person in charge of watering the garden center is ideal
- Harvesting is done by everyone, but usually I assign tasks based on efficiency

Keeping Employees Engaged

- Let them be a part of the decision making process
- Don't helicopter over them
- Reward with praise
- Make birthdays or other life events special
- Create special projects they can take ownership of
- Find out what their passion is and help fulfill it



Keeping Records and Evaluations

- Timecards are filled out daily by employee
- Paid every two weeks
- Evaluations (Mostly verbal- nothing fancy) every month in the summer
- Usually a raise towards the end of the summer to entice them to stay on into the fall



You can start working ON your business instead of working IN it

- As a manager/owner I now can assign tasks and walk away
- Trust employees to work on their own and take ownership of their work
- Frees up my time, so I can do tasks only a manager/owner can do- in my case marketing and accounting
- Analytics- our % growth Gross Income keeps going up, while the same equation for labor goes down



In our experience...

- 4 hands get 4+ times the amount of work done
- When you have paid employees working all day, you are going to fill the day with worthwhile work
- I'm more disciplined with quitting time
- Some jobs don't feel so time consuming when you have someone working with you
- At the end of the day, I am less burnt out, because we accomplished more and were more efficient



*Never Get So Busy Making A Living
That You Forget To Make A Life*

