

BENCHMARKING AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

By Forrest Stegelin, Extension Agribusiness Specialist



Benchmarking

What is benchmarking? No, it not putting graffiti on the rolling stock tables in the greenhouse. Benchmarking is a management technique that sets goals or minimum standards for accomplishment. But benchmarking goes much further than merely jotting down a few attainable criteria. Benchmarking targets critical success factors, both pluses and minuses—what will

lead to success and what should be avoided at all cost? Benchmarking asks two critical questions:

Are we doing the right things? [*effectiveness*], and
Are we doing things right? [*efficiency*].

Consequently, benchmarking is a purposeful, information-intensive, externally focused measurement process that sets objective goals for developing action plans.

Additionally, benchmarking provides guidelines and details necessary to planning for competitive excellence, by identifying best practices and identifying gaps in performance and opportunities for improvement. Benchmarking is based on the philosophy of continuous improvement; it looks at the roles, processes, and strategic issues.

Why is benchmarking the latest buzzword in labor management? Benchmarking:

- (a) signals management's willingness to pursue a philosophy that embraces change in a proactive rather than reactive manner;
- (b) establishes meaningful goals and performance measures that reflects an external customer focus which fosters quantum-leap thinking and focuses on high pay-off opportunities;
- (c) creates an early awareness of competitive *disadvantage*; and
- (d) promotes teamwork that is based on competitive need and driven by data, not intuition or gut feeling or chance.

$$P = f [(a, m, u) + wc]$$

Employee *performance* is measured two-fold ways:

effectiveness (are they doing the right things?) and
efficiency (are they doing things right?).

But what contributes to getting the best from the employee?

Performance (P) is a function of:

- ability (a) buy, hire or train the required skills
- motivation (m) effort, willingness to work
- understanding (u) know the performance and activity expectations
- work climate (wc) policies, rewards, relations.

The employee provides the ability (a), motivation (m), and understanding (u); the employer provides the work climate (wc). Performance is not a one-way street; the employer contributes to the

level of performance of the employee with the work environment—facilities, equipment, the other team members, training, etc.

For an employee to fully understand the expectations of him/her, a detailed *job description* should be provided the employee prior to employment. The job description specifies (a) what activities are to be performed, (b) what the job goals [the benchmarks] are for the specific position, (c) what means of evaluation or performance appraisal format will be used to assess the employee's performance—is the employee meeting the benchmarks—and by whom will the appraisal be done, and (d) the organizational flow, i.e., chain of command,—what is the employee responsible for?, who is he/she responsible to?, who is responsible to the employee?, and is there any authority conferred to the employee (can they make any work related decisions?), including the limits?

"The employer generally gets the employee he deserves."

**Sir Walter Gilbey,
English agriculturalist.**

Following are ten steps to good labor relations:

1. Give employee a chance to achieve by allowing them to complete a job from beginning to end;
2. Provide employees with opportunity for growth;
3. Grant responsibility, and increase periodically;
4. Show appreciation;
5. Put yourself in employee's place, both in the business and in family life;
6. Praise in public, criticize in private;
7. Offer incentives on a trial basis to fine-tune;
8. Ask employees to set long-term and short-term goals, and share their own ambitions, and involve them in setting priorities and deadlines;
9. Deal with employees as individuals—different strokes for different folks; and
10. Treat workers as you would want to be treated yourself.



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An employer cannot "motivate" employees, as motivation is a personal trait that the employee possesses as he/she arrives for work. The employer can and must provide a work climate or environment that is conducive to achieving performance. There are four primary motivational factors associated with work:

- (a) a sense of accomplishment;
- (b) influence and power;
- (c) a person's need for recognition; and
- (d) the potential for growth and development opportunities.

Note that money is not a motivational factor.

To provide those four motivational factors, here are some sure-fire ways to nudge or positively "motivate" the employees who are just shy of the employer's expectations:

- (1) get the employee involved;
- (2) make the employee's work more meaningful and rewarding;
- (3) explain the peripheral workings and contacts of the business;
- (4) cross-train employees;
- (5) don't "mother hen;"
- (6) acknowledge the feelings of your workers;
- (7) encourage people to improve their skills;
- (8) set up regular, periodic job performance reviews;
- (9) give "pats on the back;" and
- (10) keep an "open door."

"Management is nothing more than motivating other people."
- Lee Iacocca

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NEW SEMINAR DESIGNED FOR FLORICULTURE PROFESSIONALS

Orlando, FL – A brand new seminar, designed by Floriculture professionals for Floriculture professionals is scheduled for May 2000 near Tampa.

The Floriculture Spring Seminar will take place Thursday and Friday, May 18th and 19th in conjunction with the Suncoast Greenhouses Open House in Seffner. The Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association (FNGA) Floriculture Division expects a record turnout.

"We expect to attract a record crowd to this event," says FNGA Floriculture Division Chairman Keith Loftus of Earl J. Small Growers in Pinellas Park. "This is a brand new format for our original Floriculture Winter Seminar and it will offer even more information – and networking – that the Floriculture professional can use."

Thursday's topics include basic production information dealing with soil & media, growth regulators, pests and disease. The entire afternoon will be devoted to the newest in vegetative crops for Florida, and the Southeast. That evening will be an optional barbe-

cue complete with exhibitors and an opportunity to meet the speakers and other professionals in your field.

A bonus this year is a tour of Suncoast Greenhouses on Friday, May 19th. This exciting day will include workstations in production issues, soils, growth regulators, quality assurance, innovative shipping and the latest from seed producers.

Because of the changes made to the FNGA Floriculture Division's production seminar, Elements of Color and Color Magic will not be held in 2000. These landscape color seminars have been popular for many years and plans are already in the works for a new and improved program in Spring of 2001.

Brochures and registration materials will be available in late February. For more information, contact Merry Mott at FNGA, 800/375/FNGA (3642), fax 47/295-1916 or e-mail to

The Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association (FNGA) represents the entire Environmental Horticulture industry in Florida, with a value added economic impact on the state of \$5.4 billion.