

Hiring and Managing Farm Crews



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Our operation in a glance

- Farming on 5 acres,
- 3 heated greenhouses and 3 high tunnels.
- Staff of 4 year round and 8-10 in season including us.
- Selling to 3 farmers' markets, florists, CSA shares, 2 on-farm events.
- Over 100 weddings and events annually.
- Annuals, perennials, bulbs, plants, woodies.





Only with a good crew!

Staff

- You can't do it without them.
- They will make or break your operation.
- The most expensive item in the budget.
- You want them invested in your operation.



- When is your farm big enough to support more staff?
- How do you hire the right people?
- How do you get the most out of the staff that you hire?
- How do you keep staff from year to year?
- When and how do you let them go?



When to bring on staff

- As a grower, you need to know your budget and how the numbers all line up.
- Is your business growing each year?
- Are you not getting to everything?
- What can you delegate to new or returning staff?



Type of Staffing

- Full-time vs. Part-time
- Seasonal vs. Year-round
- Apprentice/ Intern
- Younger vs. Older
- H-2A Temporary Workers

Hiring

- The most important decisions of the season.
- You want good, dependable people who are physically fit, trustworthy and will hopefully return next year.
- Know the skills you are looking for when hiring.



Where to find Staff

- On line: Farming and hort. listings, local college job list, Craigslist
- Social Media, Facebook etc.
- Customers into volunteers into staff.
- Friend's kids.
- H-2A process.



- Farm help needed for fast-paced, diverse flower farm. Experience preferred in farming or horticulture operation, retail experience appreciated. Part-time and full-time positions available starting in April, 2014. Must be articulate, dependable, organized and punctual. Competitive wages. Some heavy lifting (over 50 lbs.) will be required. Email letter and resume to flowerfarmjob@gmail.com.

Resume Review Tips

- Experience in restaurants, fishing boats or other fast paced jobs.
- Cross country runners, cyclists, swimmers.
- Of course, other farming experience but maybe not too much.



Interviewing

- They are there to interview you as well. Give them your story but don't do all of the talking.
- Have at least 2 people interview the candidate if possible.
- Write out some relevant questions.
- Working interview; 1/2 or full day.
- Diana's walking trick.
- Do not offer the job at the interview.

Once Hired, Welcome

- Written offer letter with the details of the position.
- Paper work; W-4, I9, Staff info form.
- 2 week decision point where both parties can back out if it's not a good fit.
- Staff training; job shadow other staff; group training.
- Practical matters: Cellphone use, wristwatch or issue them a pair of clippers or other tools.

ARS clippers



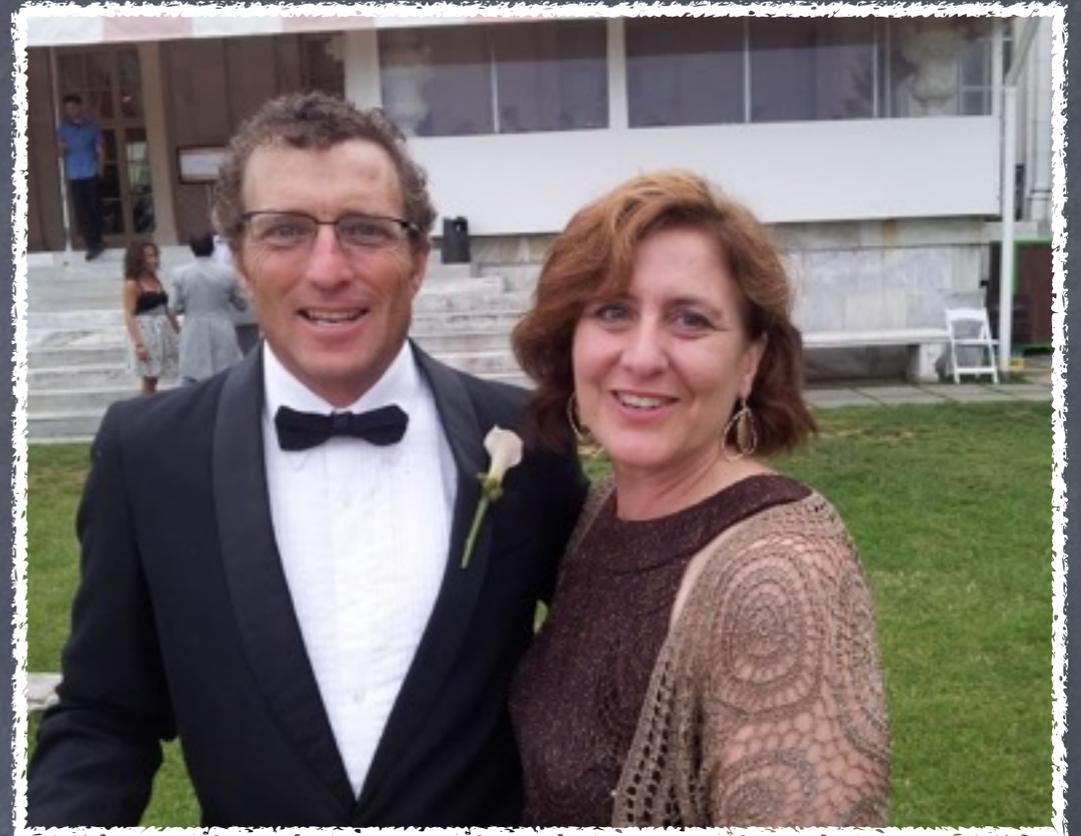
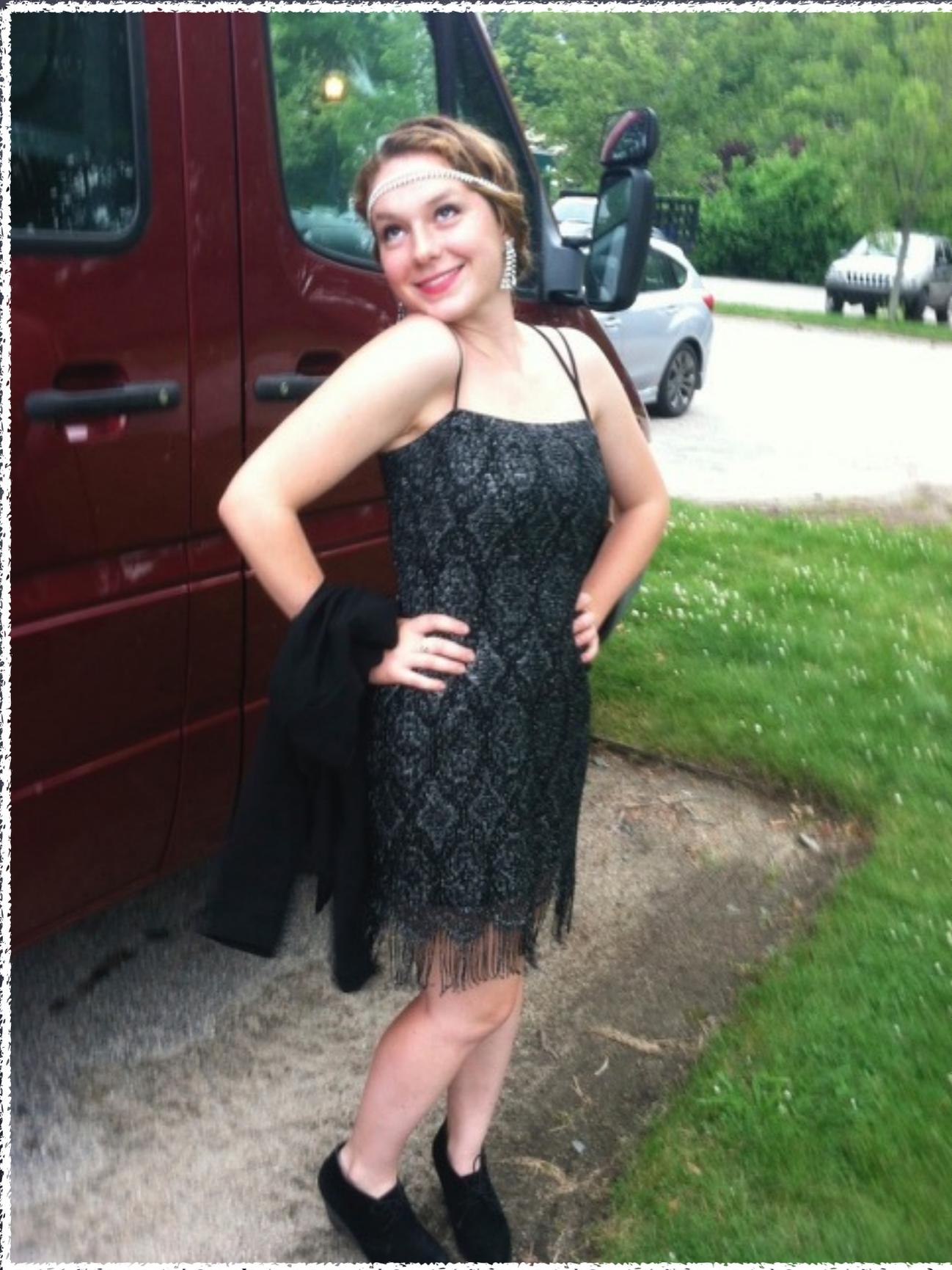
Staff Communication

- Weekly meetings; go over upcoming projects and orders.
- To do list updated each week.
- Daily morning check-ins.
- End of day touch base about tomorrow.
- Mid-summer review.



Morale Building

- Match crew size to the job.
- Let the crew decide the order of work sometimes.
- Eat lunch together.
- Boss needs to do some dirty work sometimes too.
- Train staff to do a bit of tractor work or other specialized jobs.
- Staff outings/ parties.
- Treats.





Lunch time



Be silly sometimes.

Staff Efficiency

- Manage their time wisely. This is your most important job.
- Prioritize jobs. Give up on crops if they are taking too much labor.
- Work on tables not the ground whenever possible.
- Save up jobs for a rainy day.
- Have a few small jobs for the end of the day in case someone needs one.



Friday afternoon bouquet making.

Pay and Benefits

- Hourly vs. Salary vs. Piecework: match to the size and nature of your farm.
- Payroll, not including owner compensation, should be around 20–30% of the overall expense budget.
- Benefits: Do you include flowers/veggies? Health?



Firing: We're Done, Goodbye.

- If an employee is not working up to potential, give them a warning and a week to improve the behavior. If still not up to par, it's time to re-evaluate; another week or let them go.
- The sooner the better. Our 2 week trial usually catches them.
- Don't fire them if you are in the middle of a heated situation. Cool down and evaluate calmly.
- Do fire them if they are causing you more stress than help.

End of Season

- Bonus Pay?
- Feel out crew for next season. Make an offer?
- Workers file for Unemployment Benefits?





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