

WHAT AN EMPLOYEE LOOKS FOR IN AN EMPLOYER

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It is great to see more employees now taking an active part in their recruitment. Historically there has been a perception that 'recruitment = employer choosing an employee', which simply is not correct. There are a few people saying now that recruitment is about the employee choosing their employer; this is wrong also. Recruitment is about both parties choosing each other. Certainly the recruitment process is started by the employer (as they get to exclusively choose who they interview) but after that it can truly be two ways.

Following are some hints that can help employees choose the right employer.

Referee check the potential employer

There is definitely a right and a wrong way to go about this. The Privacy Act is quite clear that you can only talk to referees who have been offered by the person being checked.

The employers who are most organised will have a list of names and telephone numbers that they will give you at interview of people you can call. Past and/or existing staff are the best; the vet or farm consultant are also good and neighbours are the next best option.

Do not do referee checks until after the interview as the interview will give you a feel for the person and will provide a guide for questions. Another reason for not doing the checks until after the interview is that you may get a biased view from a referee and therefore go into the interview with preconceived ideas.

Always talk to more than one referee. If after talking to two referees the answers given are consistent then you have probably got a fairly accurate picture (provided you haven't talked to two existing staff that share the same house!). Talk to one existing and one previous staff member or the consultant and one staff member. If you get conflicting answers from the first two referee checks, do a third one and then the majority rules!

A couple of good questions to ask are: Would you work for this person again? Or, No one is perfect, so what would you like to change about this person?

If the potential employer does not offer any referees to you during the interview, ask them if it is appropriate to talk to some of their existing or previous staff? Not only is the answer important, so is the way they deal with the question. Do they react negatively to the question, such as, Why do you want to do that – don't you trust us? The answer is, We just want to be thorough in choosing the right place to work. And I suspect you will have got your answer already.

Referee checks are probably the most important means of learning about a potential employer. It is important to make your own judgements. Do not **just** listen to other people.

Be observant at interview

How organised and professional are they? Do they produce a written Position Description at the interview? How do they speak about past employees?

Look at how the house is kept (if you are interviewed in the potential employer's house). Is what you are seeing consistent with your standards?

Same for the farm and machinery – are they up to your standards?

If the dairy is filthy, do not say the dairy is filthy. Ask the potential employer how they feel about the dairy – are they happy with the standards?

All these things help you to establish if this employer is one you want to work with.

Remember leopards do not change their spots, so if the potential employer has influence on the way the dairy looks, then it is likely it will always look that way (or worse).

You do need to be careful here though if you are looking at a position where the employer does not influence it directly, e.g. an absentee owner with a Farm Manager. Then the answer, This dairy is not what we expect of our staff and we expect the next Manager to improve on this, may be valid.

Look to see if the repairs and maintenance are happening, or is the farm very run down? Is there money being spent on the property, and if not will you be able to get the water pump fixed?

Look at the total opportunity i.e. room to progress, training, supportive employers – not solely the dollars.

Compatibility

The most important thing we do when we help the recruitment process is 'matching' people to people. This does not necessarily mean they have to be the 'best of mates'.

Compatibility with an absentee employer is different to compatibility with people who will be working together each day.

Compatibility is also about people's philosophies, e.g. the cleanliness of the dairy, attitude to machinery, all grass or Intelact.

The best advice I can give is look and listen for the things you do not want to see or hear. Most people only look for the things they want to see or hear and suppress the ones they do not want to see or hear. Hopefully there will be none of the latter! If there are, then you need to question yourself. Is this the right job for me?

Consider both the people (e.g. are they quick tempered, or are they slow at making decisions – are these a problem to you?) and the property (e.g. policy on Nitrogen use – is it the same as your philosophy?).

All this might sound a bit hard, but due diligence before you say yes to a job can prevent heartache and upheaval in the future if it means you do choose the right job and the right people.