



job satisfaction

Work Environment, Job Satisfaction Top Employee Priority Lists

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A positive working environment for employees is the common goal of all good owners and managers. Such an environment encompasses favorable working conditions, good air quality, timely management feedback and an understanding of job goals and priorities.

Studies have shown that employees are also willing to make some wage concessions in order to work in better

environments and in a job they enjoy.

Hiring extra labor for weekends or extra time off, upgrading facilities to make them safer and more pleasant to work in, and the mere availability of dust masks are examples of good investments to ensure employee satisfaction and retention rates.

Typical Workweek

The sheer nature of pork produc-

tion requires consistent care and management of animals seven days a week. Consequently, production employees generally work longer hours and more days per week with fewer weekends off than their civilian counterparts.

But that's changing. In the 2005 survey, employees and their bosses reported fewer hours worked per week, on average, compared to the 2000 survey reports (Table 12).



Employees indicated they worked 45.3 hours/week, on average, 3.4 hours less than in 2000, which matched the 1990 level. This reverses a trend noted in the 1995 and 2000 surveys when hours worked per week had been on an upswing.

By comparison, the average workweek reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2005 was 33.8 hours, 25.4% less than the average reported by hog farm employees. Thus, while annual salaries in the pork industry are now closer to the U.S. average, pay/hour worked is substantially lower in the pork sector.

It is interesting to note, however, that producers/owners reported their employees average 43.2 hours/week, 2.1 hours fewer than employees said they were working.

Back in 1990, the spread between employer expectations and employee average hours worked/week was 1.5 hours. The margin increased in 1995 to 4.5 hours, then dropped back to 2.1 hours in 2000.

In 2005, 63% of producers and 72.6% of employees reported workweeks of more than 40 hours. However, 50.3% of producers expected their employees to put in a 41-50-hour workweek, while 44.9% of employees said their workweek fell within that range.

The discrepancy widens in the greater than 50 hours/week category. Only 12.7% of the producers expect their employees are working more than 50 hours/week, while 27.7% of the employees report doing so.



The biggest discrepancy occurred in the 60-plus workweek, where just 5.2% of employers reported their workers fell, while three times as many employees said they worked that many hours. The percentage of employees report-

edly working 60 or more hours/week has declined over 15 years, however.

This comparison reveals two interesting trends. Producers and employees agree that longer hours are expected in larger operations, but most operations are now reporting fewer weekly hours.

It is also interesting to note that once differences in operation size are considered, producers in the Southeast have consistently reported employees work fewer hours/week than their peers in other regions. Alternatively, more educated employees have consistently reported working fewer hours a week, as did women in 2000 and 2005.

And, of course, with employees working every other weekend or with partial Saturdays and Sundays off, it is common for them to put in a 50-hour week.

Table 12: Average Hours a Producer Expects a Full-Time Employee to Work and the Average Hours Worked by an Employee

Hours/Week	Producer				Employee			
	2005	2000	1995	1990	2005	2000	1995	1990
20 or less	7.0%	2.3%	6.8%	3.9%	9.8%	5.8%	6.9%	14.8%
21 - 30	5.4%	2.3%	3.8%	3.4%	3.7%	3.2%	4.6%	7.4%
31 - 40	24.7%	16.9%	18.7%	17.8%	13.9%	10.2%	7.8%	9.4%
41 - 50	50.3%	65.4%	52.1%	52.0%	44.9%	45.7%	36.8%	33.0%
51 - 60	7.5%	6.9%	9.1%	12.1%	12.7%	14.7%	15.1%	12.4%
60 or more	5.2%	6.2%	9.4%	10.8%	15.0%	20.4%	28.8%	23.0%
Average	43.2%	46.5%	45.2%	46.7%	45.3%	48.7%	49.7%	45.2%

NOTE: Table 12 in 2000 also reported days of work in a week. This information was not included here because the same questions were not asked in 2005, so there is no new information.



on pages E31-32.)

Nearly 90% of producers indicated dust masks or respirators are provided, and 92.2% of employees verified that they were. However, only one-fourth of employees said they used them. Producers weren't much better, just 34.5% reporting that they do (Table 14).

However, a comparison to past surveys shows more producers are using dust masks and respirators now compared to 1990, which is good news given the decline in use reported in 2000. For employees, the percentage using a dust mask or respirator had also declined in 2000, but their use increased in 2005, as well. Still, unlike producers, the percentage of employees who reported using dust masks and respirators in 2005 is not as high as it was in 1990.

Not only is mask use low, so is the training on how to properly use them. In 2000, almost 90% of employees

Owners responded to this challenge by making weekend hours more flexible. In 1995, nearly 31% of producers and over 26% of employees said their weekend schedules were flexible or staggered by working part of Saturday or Sunday (Table 13).

This flexibility declined in 2000, when only 22.7% of producers and 17.8% of employees reported this flexibility. In 2005, 26.7% of producers and 20.6% of employees said they had this flexibility.

Two weekends off work a month was the most common in the recent survey. One weekend off was the least common.

The percentage of employees reporting four weekends off per month was twice that reported by producers. The difference probably reflects that employees completing the survey tended to work for larger operations. Over 11% of employees indicated they did not have any weekends off, similar to the 10% of producers who did not give weekends off.

Dust Mask Use Improves

The 2005 survey was expanded with new questions on workplace safety to gain a better understanding of what producers and employees are doing to protect themselves against exposure to dust, gases and common workplace injuries.

Specifically, these new questions

asked about the provision and use of ear protection, eye protection, foot protection, and "lock out/tag out" systems for power equipment. Additionally, producers and employees were asked about dust mask and respirator availability and use. (Also see related article

Table 13: Number of Weekends an Employee Has Off per Month

	Producer				Employee			
	2005	2000	1995	1990	2005	2000	1995	1990
One Weekend off	5.6%	5.4%	7.5%	9.1%	5.6%	5.4%	6.0%	12.2%
Two Weekends off	41.0%	40.2%	37.9%	43.0%	36.8%	43.0%	37.7%	39.7%
Three Weekends off	10.2%	14.3%	9.5%	9.5%	13.2%	12.8%	9.0%	7.9%
Four Weekends off	6.6%	8.9%	7.4%	10.8%	12.6%	10.3%	9.0%	11.1%
No Weekends off	10.0%	8.4%	6.9%	14.3%	11.3%	10.8%	11.8%	19.4%
Flexible or Partial Weekends off	26.7%	22.7%	30.9%	13.3%	20.6%	17.8%	26.5%	9.7%

Table 14: 2005 Producer Provision and Employee Use of Protective Equipment and Training

	Producer	Employee
Producer Provided		
Dust Mask or Respirator	89.2%	92.2%
Dust Mask or Respirator Training	55.0%	45.4%
Ear Protection	64.9%	83.8%
Eye Protection (Safety Glasses)	47.0%	61.2%
Protective Foot Ware (Metatarsal Guard Boots)	37.3%	55.7%
"Lock Out/Tag Out" Procedure for Power Equipment	29.8%	46.5%
Employee Use		
Dust Mask or Respirator	34.5%	25.4%
Ear Protection	NA	64.5%
Eye Protection (Safety Glasses)	NA	36.9%

Note: NA means this response was not offered.

Table 15: Producer Management Practices

	2005	2000	1995	1990
Provide Employee Handbook	21.0%	22.2%	12.8%	12.0%
Provide Written Job Description	26.6%	32.7%	24.3%	24.6%
Provide Work Plan	50.4%	49.0%	51.5%	57.2%
Frequency of Work Plan Review				
Daily	49.0%	35.0%	47.6%	53.6%
Weekly	26.7%	27.4%	27.1%	24.1%
Monthly	15.0%	17.5%	15.2%	10.0%
Other	9.3%	20.2%	10.0%	12.4%
Have Formal Evaluations	22.0%	23.3%	18.1%	NA
Frequency of Evaluations				
Quarterly	9.9%	11.2%	20.8%	NA
Semi-Annually	10.8%	15.8%	13.2%	NA
Annually	36.8%	27.5%	26.3%	NA
Never	33.5%	20.0%	25.9%	NA
Other	9.0%	25.5%	13.8%	NA
New Employee Training Program	25.1%	NA	NA	NA
Ongoing Employee Training Program	30.1%	NA	NA	NA

Note: NA means this response was not offered.

indicated that their employers supplied dust masks or respirators, but less than half were trained to use them. In 2005, 55% of producer said they offered training, while 45.4% of employees indicated training was offered.

Failure to use the dust mask or respirator provided by an employer risks employee health and increases the likelihood that they will require sick days or file for disability or workers' compensation. Either way, the cost of employment increases.

The 2005 survey revealed that ear protection was more widely offered with nearly 65% of producers indicating they provided this safeguard and 84% of employees verifying ear protection was available; 64.5% of the employees used ear protection.

Eye protection was available from 47% of producers, while 61.2% of employees said protective eyewear was available; 36.9% of employees indicated they used eye protection.

Protective footwear was provided, according to 55.7% of employees, while 37.3% of producers said they offered the footwear.

A "lock out/tag out" system for power equipment was available for 46.5% of employees, while 29.8% of producers said they had such a program.

Work Environment

Both producers and employees believe they have favorable work environments. Furthermore, both have reported continued improvement over

time.

In the 1990 survey, 79.5% of producers and 74.7% of employees reported an excellent or good work environment. In 2005, 89.1% of producers and 86.2% of employees described their work environment as excellent or good.

The 1990 survey also reported only 1.4% of producer reported a poor work environment, a value that has consistently fallen, which stood at 0.3% in 2005. Similarly, only 2.6% of employees reported a poor work environment in 1990, a value that has also consistently fallen to low of 2% in 2005.

Personnel Management

As size of hog production facilities increase, the dependence on hired labor requires producers to develop new personnel management skills.

It is critical that producers understand that, in general, most employees want to do a good job and to be proud of their work. Therefore, when an



employee fails to live up to a producer's expectations, it is usually due to one of two reasons. The employee either lacks the required skills to perform the job properly, or he or she does not understand what is expected.

New employees often begin a job with high levels of uncertainty and anxiety. Their anxiety worsens when they do not have a clear understanding of a job's responsibilities and the employer's expectations.

Put It In Writing

Employee handbooks, written job descriptions and periodic work plans can help solve some of the uncertainties and anxious moments. Putting responsibilities and expectations in writing gives employees a tangible reference.

Frequent work reviews and formal performance evaluations provide the necessary feedback to employees and help them gauge how they are doing. When an employee has exceeded expectations, these evaluations provide a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge a job well done.

Unfortunately, the value of many personnel management aids has not been grasped by many pork producers/employers.

In fact, the surveys since 1990 show that the majority of producers do not take advantage of employee handbooks, written job descriptions and work plans. While the percentage of producers using employee handbooks nearly doubled in the decade following the initial survey in 1990, their use has leveled off, coming in at 21% in 2005 (Table 15).

Similar trends were seen in the percentage of producers using written job descriptions, but the slippage was greater in the recent survey, dropping from 32.7% in 2000 to just 26.6% in 2005.

And, the proportion of producers using written work plans dropped from 57.2% in 1990, to 49% in 2000, settling in at just over 50% in 2005.

Those who do utilize work plans are now more likely to review them on a

daily basis. Some 49% indicated this daily review took place, up markedly from the 35% indicating they reviewed them daily in 2000. About 27% of producers have held fast to their weekly review of work plans over the last three surveys.

The frequency of employee evaluation appears to have declined in the three surveys the question was posed. In 1995, nearly 21% of producers indicated they conducted quarterly evaluations, a number that declined

to 9.9% in 2005. Semi-annual evaluations declined as well. But, the number reporting annual evaluations increased from 26.3% to 36.8%. Unfortunately, the number indicating no formal evaluations increased from 25.9% to 33.5%.

Some producers indicated that formal evaluations were done "as needed." A word of caution is appropriate here because it is too easy to review an employee's work and conduct only when performance is poor. This

Table 16: Areas Identified by Producers as Greatest Weakness in Personnel Management

	2005	2000	1995
Few Training or Growth Opportunities	32.7%	29.3%	40.0%
Weak Benefit Package	26.5%	29.9%	32.4%
Motivating Employees	25.3%	23.6%	NA
Lack Well-Developed Work Plans	22.0%	23.6%	32.7%
Poor Communications with Employees	19.0%	20.3%	28.4%
Poor Recruiter/Trouble Getting Applicants	18.8%	12.1%	16.5%
Excessive Hours Worked	15.2%	28.2%	36.4%
Weak Salary Level	14.9%	21.1%	26.2%
Resolving Conflicts	11.9%	10.1%	NA
Getting Employees to Share Their Ideas	11.3%	15.9%	NA
Do Not Screen Applicants Well Enough	11.0%	12.1%	14.6%
Retaining Qualified Employees	10.7%	13.4%	NA
Other	6.3%	4.9%	NA
Have Poor Working Conditions for Employees	4.5%	5.8%	9.7%

Note: Producers were asked to choose as many as three responses. NA means this response was not offered.

Table 17: Employee's Level of Job Satisfaction by Rating of Their Work Environment

Work Environment Rating	Employee Satisfaction			
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Needs Changes	Poor
2005				
Excellent	72.7%	24.6%	2.7%	0.0%
Good	25.7%	61.3%	12.7%	0.3%
Fair	4.3%	39.1%	53.6%	2.9%
Poor	10.0%	0.0%	70.0%	20.0%
2000				
Excellent	70.9%	24.9%	3.8%	0.4%
Good	25.9%	60.6%	13.1%	0.5%
Fair	2.8%	31.2%	62.4%	3.7%
Poor	0.0%	14.8%	55.6%	29.6%
1995				
Excellent	71.1%	24.9%	3.7%	0.3%
Good	32.0%	51.7%	15.5%	0.8%
Fair	10.9%	35.2%	49.1%	4.8%
Poor	0.0%	15.4%	41.0%	43.6%

approach misses the valuable opportunity to recognize the employee's strengths.

New in the 2005 survey, producers were asked if they have a new employee training program. About one-fourth indicated that they did. About one-third said they also have ongoing training programs.

Management Opportunities

A more in-depth analysis of the producer responses helped to identify characteristics common to those who use handbooks, written job descriptions, written work plans and formal evaluations. Generally, this analysis revealed:

- Producers who were younger, had more employees, produced more hogs annually and operated in the Southeast or West were more likely to provide employee handbooks.

- Producers who were younger and more educated, produced more hogs and had more employees were more likely to provide employees with written job descriptions and written work plans.

- Producers who were more educated, had more employees, produced more hogs annually and operated in the West were more likely to use formal evaluations.

When producers were asked to



evaluate their weaknesses in personnel management, their most frequent responses haven't changed much since 1995.

Few training or growth opportunities and weak benefit packages were most often cited in 2005 (Table 16). Motivating employees, lack of a well-

developed work plan, and poor communication with employees continues to plague about 20% of producers.

The largest shift occurred in "excessive hours worked," dropping from 28.2% in 2000, down to 15.2% in 2005. Apparently, some weekly salary levels were resolved over the last five years too, as that weakness dropped from 21.1 % in 2000 to 14.9% in the most recent survey.

Employee Satisfaction

Happy, satisfied employees tend to work harder and are less likely to call in sick. Those who feel they are making positive contributions and are valued by their employer are generally more satisfied with their work.

Employee satisfaction was generally high in 2005. And, as one would predict, those who rated their working environment as "excellent" were more satisfied than those ranking below that mark (Table 17). It is important to remember, however, that the surveys only measure employees still on the job, having no way to gauge those who

Table 18: Employee's Level of Job Satisfaction by Region

Region	Employee Satisfaction			
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Needs Changes	Poor
2005				
Midwest	39.1%	46.0%	14.7%	0.2%
Northeast	23.1%	53.8%	17.9%	5.1%
Southeast	32.7%	45.5%	20.0%	1.8%
West	39.7%	46.2%	12.8%	1.3%
2000				
Midwest	40.5%	41.7%	15.7%	2.1%
Northeast	31.6%	50.0%	15.8%	2.6%
Southeast	25.6%	51.1%	23.3%	0.0%
West	27.0%	46.8%	25.4%	0.8%
1995				
Midwest	36.4%	41.3%	19.8%	2.5%
Northeast	36.2%	49.3%	11.6%	2.9%
Southeast	41.1%	39.4%	16.9%	2.6%
West	42.1%	39.2%	17.0%	1.8%



the '05 survey employees who reported their work environment was “fair,” 53.6% felt changes were needed.

Employees in the Midwest and West were more satisfied with their jobs than employees in the Southeast and Northeast in 2005 (Table 18).

In the Midwest, 85.1% of employees reported being satisfied or very satisfied, up slightly from 2000. In the West, 85.9% of employees reported being satisfied or very satisfied, up moderately from 2000. Job satisfaction decreased slightly in the Northeast.

The largest increase in job satisfaction occurred in the West where the percentage of satisfied and very satisfied workers increased from 73.8% to 85.9% from 2000 to 2005. This reversed the trend from 1995 to 2000.

Further analysis of the 2005 data also revealed that women are less satisfied with their jobs than men. And, employees working for larger operations were typically more satisfied with their jobs.

Job Appeal

Employees were also asked what their employer could do to make the job more appealing. Nearly half said a salary that better reflected their work would help (Table 19). However, the importance of salary declined from 55.8% in 2000 to 46.4% in 2005.

Another 34.2% said better communication would make their job more appealing, while about one-third felt more personal recognition would help.

The importance of an improved benefits package fell dramatically from 39.6% in 2000 to 22.1% in 2005, a 44% decline.

For the most part, producer responses in the 2005 survey indicated they understood what will make their operations more appealing. While the order changed between 1995, 2000 and 2005, the five most common responses coincided with those selected by employees.

Fewer Want to Own

Employee aspirations in the pork

were unsatisfied and left the industry.

Of the employees who ranked their work environment as “excellent,” 95-97% reported they were satisfied or very satisfied in 1995, 2000 and 2005.

For employees reporting a “good”

work environment, the majority (87% in 2005, 86.5% in 2000 and 83.7% in 1995) reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs.

As the work environment rating declined, so too did job satisfaction. Of

Table 19: Areas Identified by Employees That Make an Operation More Appealing

Statement	2005	2000	1995
Salary Better Reflection of Your Work	46.4%	55.8%	51.0%
Better Communication	34.2%	36.6%	39.8%
More Personal Recognition from Employer	32.4%	32.3%	28.1%
Fewer Hours	29.3%	29.3%	29.2%
Improved Benefit Package	22.1%	39.6%	35.4%
More Opportunity for Advancement	19.4%	NA	NA
Better Working Conditions	11.7%	12.9%	18.6%
More Training Opportunities	10.4%	13.9%	17.8%
More Challenge and Responsibility	8.1%	15.2%	14.2%
Clearer Defined Work Plan	7.2%	12.4%	12.6%
Other	6.3%	11.4%	10.5%

Note: Employees were asked to choose as many as three responses. NA means this response was not offered.

industry have changed over time. In an effort to gain a better understanding of employee career goals, questions in the 2005 survey were slightly more focused.

At the outset, it appears salaries and benefits offered in pork production are competitive with most other job opportunities in the communities they are located (Table 20). Women were less likely to agree that their salary and benefits are competitive in their community.

The biggest shift in employee goals appears to be a desire to own their own hog operation, dropping from nearly 75% in 1990 to about 40% in the past two surveys. Still, 78.3% felt their job would prepare them to run their own operation.

Older employees and those with more education are less likely to want their own operation. The same is true for women, employees working in operations that produce more hogs annually, and employees working in the Northeast.

Nearly 90% of employees agreed that their jobs served as good training for career advancement or preparation to operate their own operation in 1990. That number fell to 83.5% in 2000, but bounced back slightly, to 86.9% in 2005.

Still, in 2005, 63.2% felt their chances for advancement were limited in their operation, an increase from 58.7% in 2000.

In general, however, most felt their



jobs were preparing them for career advancement, whether with their current or another employer; 64.9% felt they were receiving good training that would position them to advance with their current employer.

Just 58.9% of employees said they would like pork production to be a lifelong occupation.

Four of five employees agreed that their present job was fulfilling. Women and employees working for operations in the Northeast were less likely to feel this way.

Three-fourths of employees in the 2005 survey felt their employer was sensitive to their personal needs, a slight increase over the past two surveys. □

Table 20: Job Satisfaction and Future Goals

Statement	Employees Agreeing with Statement			
	2005	2000	1995	1990
My salary and benefits are competitive with other job opportunities in my community.	81.4%	78.6%	78.9%	76.1%
This job is a good training ground to prepare me for advancement or to operate my own hog operation.	86.9%	83.5%	89.5%	93.2%
This job is a good training ground to prepare me for career advancement.	64.9%	NA	NA	NA
This job is a good training ground to prepare me for my own hog operation.	78.3%	NA	NA	NA
I would like to make a lifelong career out of managing a hog operation.	58.9%	64.1%	69.7%	67.4%
I wish to own a hog operation someday.	40.8%	39.9%	54.9%	74.6%
The chances for advancement are limited in this hog operation.	63.2%	58.7%	55.5%	58.9%
I find my present job challenging and fulfilling.	80.0%	78.5%	80.5%	82.4%
My employer is sensitive to my personal needs and interests.	75.6%	71.1%	72.7%	76.6%

Note: NA means this response was not offered.