

# Human Resource Management on the Ranch

*Cattlemen's College® session offers insight into finding, keeping good employees.*

by **KINDRA GORDON**, *field editor*

Kim McCuiston and Ryan Rhoades, both with the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) at Kingsville, Texas, addressed the topic

of human resources on ranches during breakout sessions at the 2016 Cattlemen's College® Jan. 27 in San Diego, Calif. "In an industry that is shrinking in

number of cattle and people, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find and replace employees," McCuiston noted.

Plus, it's costly. She shared that it is estimated to cost 50% to 150% of the annual salary of the position to replace an employee.

"We need to hire the right people and keep the right people on the ranch when we find them," McCuiston said. To find quality employees, she suggested asking current employees if they recommend anyone, or partnering with neighbors to share labor.

Once employees are hired, Rhoades emphasized the importance of keeping them informed and engaged with the operation.

"Engagement equates to retention," he stated.

From a survey of ranch employees conducted by KRIRM, the majority of employees indicated the top two factors that influenced job satisfaction were having the tools and information



## Your résumé may get you in the door, but ...

Functional skills may get you in the door for a job interview or job, but attitude, persistence and communication are what will set you apart and determine your success. That was the message Mike Moseley, veterinarian and director of global development and operations for Zoetis, shared with an audience of college-aged students attending the 2016 Cattlemen's College® breakout session. In its 23rd year, Cattlemen's College was hosted as a precursor to the Cattle Industry Convention convened Jan. 27-29 in San Diego, Calif.

"You must be able to do the job. That involves technical learning, competence, and the ability to problem-solve, plan and set priorities," Moseley told attendees. However, he added, "Innovation requires looking beyond the obvious. There are creative ways to solve problems."

He added, "Be flexible. If you're not, you're not employable."

Regarding attitude, he noted that one study discovered 46% of all new hires will fail within the first 18 months, but 89% failed for attitude reasons, not technical skills. Moseley also shared this maxim: A bad attitude is like a flat tire. You can't go anywhere until you change it.

necessary for the job, and clearly understanding performance expectations (i.e., how they will be evaluated).

Rhoades said the survey surprisingly revealed that a lower priority for employees was having a job that offered ranch work opportunities for family or on-ranch recreational opportunities for family. “We thought this would rank higher. That was surprising,” Rhoades shared.

Regarding helping employees better understand performance expectations, Rhoades emphasized the importance of defining the job with a written job description.

“The job description is a contract, which explains how to train, evaluate, award and discipline,” he explained, “so it can do a lot of things for you.”

Along with that, he noted the importance of performance reviews, and said that these reviews help communicate to employees that management cares about their progression. He shared data from a Gallup poll that found when employees have timely performance reviews, it results in 15% more productivity and 20%-40% fewer accidents.

“So there’s a money factor here,” Rhoades said.

He added, “The beef industry is not doing a very good job of providing performance reviews or training to

employees. This is an area that the industry needs to work on.”

He shared research that indicates for optimal employee performance, positive feedback should occur five times more frequently than negative feedback.

“This means performance reviews need to happen more than one time a year, and they should not be only about what someone did wrong. If you are

constantly negative with a person, how invested are they?” asked Rhoades. Instead, he advised fostering a relationship with employees that allows for positive and negative feedback on a regular basis. “You have to have frequent conversations with employees,” he concluded.

The King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management will offer a lectureship on the topic of human resource management

for ranches in September 2016. For more information visit: <http://krirm.tamuk.edu/lectureships/brmanagement/>.



**Editor’s Note:** Kindra Gordon is a freelancer and cattlemaster from Whitewood, S.D. This article was written as part of Angus Media’s online coverage of the 2016 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show. For additional coverage, visit the Newsroom at [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com).



“Be flexible,” Mike Moseley told job seekers at Wednesday’s Cattlemen’s College. “If you’re not, you’re not employable.”

Secondly, Moseley emphasized having passion and persistence for your work. He offered this comparison: “Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion.”

To that Moseley also said, “My encouragement to you young people in ag is that we need to be passionate about agriculture. If we don’t, we’re going to lose it. We need to have passion for feeding the world.”

Lastly, Moseley emphasized developing communication skills — written, oral and presentation. He noted that it takes practice to hone these skills. Additionally, Moseley emphasized teamwork and the need to work with others. “We all have to work together to be successful,” he shared.

— by Kindra Gordon