

Scottish Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme

Meeting Two Report – EAST CENTRAL

‘Recruiting, Training & Retaining Great Staff’

DRIFT, North Berwick – Wednesday 5th June 2019



The second meeting of the three-year Scottish Enterprise Agritourism Monitor Farm Project took place on Wednesday 5th June 2019 at DRIFT Café owned by East Central Monitor Farmers Stuart and Jo McNicol.

The business is located on Castleton Farm, just outside North Berwick in East Lothian.

The meeting theme 'Recruiting, Training & Retaining Great Staff' focused on how businesses should manage staff in order to create a welcoming and workable environment for employees, employers and visitors who come to a business.

The meeting included advice from guest speaker John Sinclair who owns [Craigies Farm Shop](#). John spoke about his journey from an employer starting out, to employing a team of over 60 people. He focused on how he attracts great people to work for him and how he maintains a happy and productive workforce.

East Central Monitor Farmers, Stuart and Jo also shared their challenges around staffing, which led to an open discussion with the group of almost 30 attendees, who shared their business experiences - offering advice and solutions. Areas highlighted were staff retention, matching staffing to the peaks and troughs of café custom, approach to seasonal staffing, training and appraisals.



KEY POINTS ABOUT RECRUITING, TRAINING AND RETAINING GREAT STAFF

According to recent research, the average fee for replacing a member of staff is around £30,500. This figure considers agency fees, advertising and wages during the time when a new employee is yet to reach optimum productivity and training. The conclusion was that replacing employees is an expensive business (The importance of hiring, training and retaining great employees, 2017).

So how can you ensure that your staff stay motivated in their role and retain them?

One way of doing this is to ensure your staff receive regular training to develop their skills and give them as much feedback and support as possible. Training your staff can improve business performance, profit, staff retention and morale.

JOHN SINCLAIR'S FEEDBACK

In 2007 John Sinclair and his wife Kirsteen diversified their farming enterprise to include an Agritourism element – Craigie's Farm Shop. Initially starting out as a small farm shop selling produce from their farm, the business developed exceptionally quickly driven by public demand and today consists of the following areas;

- Farm Shop
 - Gifts, deli, home baking etc.
- Butchery
 - Including buffalo meat from the nearby buffalo farm as well as a selection of Scotch Beef & Lamb
- Activities
 - 'Pick your own fruit'
 - Native kids trail (farm walk)
 - Tasting/cookery demos and workshops
- Meeting rooms available for hire
- Farm business

John shared his experiences of recruiting, training and retaining staff for the past 12 years with the 30+ Scottish business operators who attended the meeting to gain knowledge and information to help start up or expand an agritourism enterprise.

John Sinclair's advice regarding managers were;

- Don't become the 'one and only' manager of your business. People starting a new enterprise will try to do as much of the work themselves to get the business up and running but learn to recognise when a business becomes 'too big' or 'too busy' to rely on one or two managers.
 - John highlighted that the first thing they did when the business started to expand (in the very early days) was to 'sack' his wife Kirsteen as manager and employ someone who wanted that role. Kirsteen only took the role on because they felt they needed someone in place quickly to oversee the day to day running of the shop. When the business grew, they required to have someone with experience in running a farm shop to take the business to the next level. This also allowed Kirsteen to play a more strategic role in the business.

- Craigies now have seven managers in the following roles with John and Kirsteen overseeing the whole enterprise, they are:
 - Accounts
 - General Manager
 - Office Manager
 - Kitchen Manager
 - Café Manager
 - Shop Manager
 - Farm Manager
- Investing in managers to oversee the day to day running of the different areas of your business allows you to step back and look at the wider picture (such as turnover and profitability, development, infrastructure, future vision etc.)
- Ensure your manager is suitable for the role
 - Don't promote a member of staff to become manager if you don't think they can do it
 - Source a new member of staff with experience in a managerial role and has an interest/understanding in what you do
 - If you have someone internally who has the drive and willingness to move towards a manager's role, ensure they get the adequate support and training until they are comfortable in that role
- Have supervisors who can oversee operations if the manager is off (*succession plan)
- Have regular management meetings and keep everyone up to date with business inputs, outputs, turnover and areas which are doing well/areas that need improved
- Managers should own their own figures and performance; they have to report back to the rest of the team/General Manager and John & Kirsteen about the performance of their department
- Weekly management meeting for 30 minutes each Wednesday morning
- Managers also prepare the staff rota
 - Ensure they then feedback information to the staff

Recruiting

- If you recruit professionally, your business will look professional
- Create a job advert (even if it just goes on social media) with the job description/responsibilities required for the role and any experience and skills required
- Always ask for a CV
 - If someone really wants the job, they will provide a CV
 - Always ask for references – again if they have good work ethic, they will have a number of people willing to give a strong reference
- Young workers – if they come in to ask for a job accompanied by a parent or guardian, ask yourself, will they be capable of being responsible for working and using their initiative?
 - If a young person has the drive to come in on their own and ask for a job, it shows they are responsible and willing to try
- **DON'T** go with the first person that walks through the door. Even if you are desperate for staff, will employing someone who is not up for the job really make the situation in the work place any better?
- Always carry out an interview
 - Ask them what the value of the business are? (This is on the website and if they have researched the business, they should know this)

- Put your new employee on a trial period to retain control should you realise they are not the right person for the role
- The person has to fit the job, not the job around the person
- State what days/shifts the job entails, then find the person to match that
- All staff have to work a Saturday or Sunday each week regardless of their pay grade
- At trial shifts, there will be a test for recruits. If they are asked to clear a table but don't pick up a napkin from the floor, they don't have good attention to detail and may not get the job

Training

- Ensure that each member of staff has the training they require in order to deliver the service to the highest standard
- Craigies has a monthly training meeting which is compulsory to attend
- *Have a succession plan for your staff
 - o This will help if you end up in a situation where a member of staff leaves, goes on maternity leave, sick leave etc.
 - o By having a succession plan you will have the option to replace staff with current employees and make them feel more valued
 - o Start at the bottom and work their way up – encourage staff to see this as an opportunity to work hard, learn and achieve goals
- Make sure every new member of staff has an induction
 - o Avoid bringing them in to do an induction at a busy time of day when things will be moving at a quick pace and there is not enough time to focus and deliver training
 - o An induction DOES NOT need to be covered in one session. Give the managers and new employee sections to cover by specific deadlines (e.g. two weeks to read the COSHH manual)
 - o Make any important protocols clear at the start;
 - Uniform
 - Working hours/rotas
 - Holidays/cover
 - Breaks
 - Teamwork
 - Pay
 - Equipment
 - o Have a document which clearly states all the requirements in the induction which the manager and new employee must sign off
- Regular team meetings so everyone is up to speed with what is happening and if anyone needs extra support this can be highlighted before it becomes an issue
 - o Your staff will feel much more valued if they are being kept up to date with what is happening (e.g. sharing some figures on turnover, sales targets etc.)
- Procedure manuals so staff can refer to the document if they are unsure about anything
- Every single task is detailed and documented so that people are all trained consistently and all follow the same system

Retaining

- Make your staff feel valued

- John & Kirsteen at Craigies have implemented a system that they have a note of all the staff members birthdays and send each one a card/message/present/gesture on their birthdays
 - This gives your staff a personal touch and makes them feel they are valued, even if they are not seeing you on a regular basis
 - Every staff member receives a different gift/gesture
- Offer incentives/opportunities to employees to allow them to grow
 - Incentives don't have to be monetary valued bonuses. Give them a bonus related to recognition (e.g. if you pass your course you will receive promotion or responsibility for a certain area)
 - A bonus can be a team bonus (e.g. a staff trip to go bowling) that way everyone has to work as a team to achieve the goal
 - Set targets/goals for the team to work towards
- **Use the ABC system** and if staff are not performing to the standard required be honest, address them and ensure they are aware of what they have done/what is expected
 - 'A' employee – have all the attributes to a 'B' employee but have the talent, desire and ability to be promoted. They tend to be interested in the business growth/development and they could lead the team
 - 'B' employee – Great employees that work hard and understand your business mission and values. They care about operations but may not have the desire to be promoted/lead a team.
 - 'C' employee – Have bad attitudes and do not do the work well/to the best of their ability. Often can cause issues within the team and turn up to do their job with very little effort, avoiding any additional work that may occur.
 - **If you have C employees – act and resolve the issue (they need to leave)**

Director/Owner

Everyone needs 'me time' and for a business owner to achieve this they need a team that can run the business without you.

- Take a step back and look at the overall picture regularly
- Take time away from the business to have a holiday, spend time with family and friends and re-refresh your mind and body so you are well and fit to run your business
- Produce regular forecasts/budgets/benchmarking for your business
 - Compare this to yearly, monthly & weekly figures
- Set targets for different departments – each department Manager should set their own budget, so they own it
 - Regularly meet with managers to talk through these targets and pick up on any targets which are not being achieved
- Budget for staffing
 - Make sure you are not overspending on staff
 - Look at your gross profit prior before and after paying staff
- Don't become a stranger to your staff
 - Although you are not responsible for the day to day running, make sure you still show face and make a point of speaking to staff (of all levels) on a regular basis
- **DO YOUR OWN** training and continue to develop your skills and knowledge
 - Scottish Enterprise Rural Leadership Programme (applications are currently open for the 2019/20 programme. [Click here](#) for more information.)

- Have a mentor. John had a mentor in the early years of his business and over the years has used external support to help him development. Very important to take time to invest in yourself.
- Phrase John was told “A fish rots from the head down” -= meaning people need to look after themselves, invest in their skills and knowledge at the top of the business all the way down – if the owners/management team are not in good shape, the whole of the rest of the organisation will suffer
- Talk to other similar businesses and share knowledge/ideas to help each other (you may find out some information you didn't know before)

GROUP FEEDBACK TO STUART & JO MCNICOL

Stuart and Jo opened DRIFT; a café built on a cliff on farmland in June 2018. The café overlooks sandy beach and has panoramic views out to sea and over to the Fife coast. DRIFT is built out of up-cycled shipping containers. Food is produced fresh on site and currently focuses on soup, scones, cakes, teas and coffees as well as selling retail coffee and e-coffee cups.

Currently Jo is the only 'full time' manager with 16 staff - 2 full-time and 14 part-time.

The couple also run Castleton Events, an events business delivering high end events and weddings in a marquee on the farm. This enterprise runs from April to September and the venue can accommodate up to 250 with access to a private beach.

Stuart works on the arable enterprise alongside his father. Stuart also undertakes a lot of the financial analysis of the café business, assists with operations as needed and works on the strategy and development of the business with Jo.

Management/Staff

Moving forward Stuart and Jo would like to have a manager and supervisors responsible for running DRIFT to free up their time to work towards developing all aspects of their business. Jo has recently promoted two members of staff to supervisor roles.

Since opening in June 2018, the following areas have been highlighted;

- There are 16 staff which is quite a large team for the size/offering that DRIFT have. Stuart and Jo state this is due to most of the staff members being part-time
- Within the first month of opening the café was understaffed (due to the demand from the public visiting)
 - This led to a quick recruitment process through social media and therefore perhaps some staff members were not suitable for the roles
- The business has exceeded financial forecasts
 - With the business only having been open for a year, the couple had no figures to base their original forecasts
 - Moving forward into 2019 they will be able to forecast and budget more accurately as they will have a set of accounts to compare against
- Training is carried out with staff, but they admit this could be done to a better standard
 - Jo will look to develop a structured induction process which future managers and supervisors can use to train staff

- Staff to date have been on good rates of pay, with a flat rate being paid to all staff up until April 2019 (regardless of age)
 - o Stuart and Jo's theory of paying staff a flat rate across all levels was to try and attract a high standard of employees
 - o They have since altered the wage of any school workers to be slightly less
- To ensure the business is paying staff accurately, Jo has invested in the [RotaCloud](#) app, which allows staff to be responsible for clocking in/out of each shift
 - o This has helped with staff costs because they are now accessing more accurate timesheets from staff
 - o Prior to introducing the app, they found they were often either overpaying staff if they left early, or, sometimes weren't paying staff enough if they did extra hours
- Stuart & Jo admit more could be done to show staff their appreciation (such as setting targets, appraisals etc.)

Quick Actions for East Central Monitor Farm to take;

- ✓ Carry out a structured induction process and update/create an induction checklist
- ✓ Allow adequate time for training to take place for new members of staff (e.g. not on busy days)
- ✓ Do trial shifts for new staff
- ✓ Offer incentives/appraisals/recognition to staff – whether it be a birthday gift, team night out or 'employee of the week'. It will give staff an incentive to work hard and follow the business values
- ✓ Budget, forecast and set targets regularly and share some of the main findings with staff (e.g. month to month sale increases/decreases) – produce monthly management information with % of staff costs in relation to turnover
 - o Have team meetings and share some of this information with the staff
- ✓ Make time to step back and undertake the strategic planning required to grow and develop the business

BUSINESS FEEDBACK

What knowledge/ideas about recruiting great staff will you take home after Wednesday's meeting?

- To interview carefully
- You should look long term when recruiting. A short-term fix is not the right solution. Acknowledge staff birthdays with a gesture. Always remember to praise staff where possible, makes them feel appreciated.
- Empower them to take on more responsibility
- Better define roles and expectations. Host weekly meetings. Introduce good practices and procedures, as well as regular, relevant training and personal grading appraisals. As the business grows investigate staff surveys to find out what's working and what isn't.
- That we should go ahead and recruit and not worry about not being able to get rid of staff that don't perform well. This would allow me to spend more time diversifying our business.
- Scoring on the A,B,C system. Not to be frightened to have the tricky discussions. Making staff feel appreciated and part of the business.
- It pays to wait to get the right staff

What knowledge/ideas about training staff will you take home from Wednesday's meeting?

- The importance of SOPs and encouraging staff ensuring they understand the business ethos
- Have a proper system in place, allowing for promotion. The better the staff the more chance you can have time off!
- Delegation and less day to day management
- That it shouldn't be just a tick box exercise, make it relevant
- Ideally you would want to train them well enough that they could replace ourselves in the future.
- Training makes all staff work to one set of rules. Makes it is easier to identify where things are going well and less well.
- Correct training is critical

What knowledge/ideas about retaining great staff will you take home from Wednesday's meeting?

- Make the environment a friendly happy one, and always show your appreciation. Maybe pay slightly more than the norm to make sure you retain them. As I said above acknowledge birthdays and other occasions. Maybe a bonus scheme as well.
- Perhaps showing more empathy i.e. birthday cards
- They need to feel appreciated and are being utilised to their full potential. Recognise potential in staff and help grow them into your business, promotions etc.
- That we should remember things like their birthdays and make them feel appreciated.
- The personal touch. Making staff feel they are part of the business.
- Good motivation

What did you enjoy about Wednesday's meeting?

- Meeting people
- A very friendly bunch of people all wanting to improve, all on the same wavelength. Lovely bit of beef!!
- Interesting people attending to interact with
- It's a nice relaxed atmosphere, comfortable for people to share, love that there is always room for some humour but still has a nice balance of information, and knowledge sharing.
- The food, the relaxed atmosphere, the insights into other people's successful businesses.
- Finding that a dry subject could be that interesting.
- The openness of everyone. Presentation was excellent

DRIFT. - MEETING TWO ATTENDEES

There were 24 attendees at the main meeting from 5pm to 8pm. In addition, there were the monitor farmers (2), delivery team (2) and Jackie Green from SE (1), so 29 in total.

Nine of these attended Instagram training which took place from 3pm to 4.30pm. (*)

No.	First Name	Surname	Ticket Type	Company	Website
1	Kay	Wilson	Agritourism business	Lomond Lass *	https://www.shemoreonlochmond.com/
2	Trudi	Cueto	Agritourism business	George Gibson & Sons *	
3	Niall	Bowser	Agritourism business	Argaty Red Kites *	http://www.argatredkites.co.uk/
4	Robin	Austin	Agritourism business	Barstobrick and Fellend Farm *	https://www.barstobrick.co.uk/
5	Elen	Austin	Agritourism business	Barstobrick *	https://www.barstobrick.co.uk/
6	Balfour	Stewart	Agritourism business	The Busstop	https://www.thebusstop.scot/
7	Robert	Wilson	Agritourism business	JRB Wilson & Sons	http://www.fluffymoos.com/
8	Bobby	Lennox	Agritourism business	R J Lennox and Son *	https://www.shemoreonlochmond.com/
9	Eric	Linklater	Agritourism business	George Gibson & Sons*	
10	David	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
11	Chris	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
12	Stephanie	Cloussen	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk
13	Jenny	Cowan	Agritourism business	Eastside Cottages	www.eastsidecottages.co.uk
14	Shona	Duncan	Farmer looking to diversify	HJ & IM Duncan *	
15	Jasmine	Jackson	Farmer looking to diversify	Kersheugh	
16	Fenwick	Jackson	Farmer looking to diversify	Fenwick G Jackson	
17	Jonathan	Sloan	Farmer looking to diversify	JA Sloan Ltd	http://Podcampingscotland.co.uk/
18	Charlotte	Baillie	Farmer looking to diversify		
19	Eilidh	Eccles	Farmer looking to diversify	Saughland	
20	Sally	Williams	Farmer looking to diversify	R & A Wilson Ltd	
21	Sally	Duncan	Young Farmers, Rural Youth, Students	HJ & IM Duncan *	
22	Kelvin	Pate	Farmer looking to diversify		
23	John	Sinclair	Guest Speaker	Craigies Farm Shop	www.craigies.co.uk
24	Duncan	Barrie	Rural business	Galbraith Group	www.galbraithgroup.com