

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The HR Newsletter of The Agriculture Program

Volume 1, Issue 3

June 5, 2002

Inside this issue:

Coaching	1
HR Quick Facts and Links	1
TRS Online Account Access is Here!	2
County Programs HR Corner	2
Silent Auction	2
Training Room	3
I'd Rather Be FISHing	3
Helping Employees Succeed	4
Finding Time to Cook is a Crock	5
2002-03 Annual Enrollment is Just Around the Corner!	5

Coaching

When we think about training, we usually think about a formal training seminar or session. But there is a great deal of training that can be accomplished through more informal day-to-day interactions with our co-workers. Coaching is an important element in addressing both negative performance and reinforcing and creating a positive climate.

Not everyone can be a super star, but it's important that each member of the team contributes their best. "To coach" comes from the root meaning, "to bring a person from where they are to where they want to be." So being an effective coach means bringing a person from where they are to where they want to be." Here are a few tips on how to coach and lead your team:



1. Celebrate your employees' success! Don't take the day-to-day accomplishments for granted.

2. Encourage the super stars to teach and provide them with training that will help them stretch.
3. Spend time with employees and listen to their ideas.
4. Build confidence by increasing responsibilities.
5. Give frequent, accurate and specific feedback.
6. Set goals and follow up on progress.
7. Identify mentors and hook up employees with individuals who possess the right knowledge, skills and expertise.
8. When needed, provide performance improvement sessions offering feedback and a specific action plan.



We're all busy and it's sometimes easy to take the efforts of our co-workers and team members for granted. Try not to fall into that trap! Success for each of us depends in large measure on the support of others.

HR QUICK FACTS

- **Employment/Compensation**
Phone: 979-845-7986
Fax: 979-862-4885
- **Benefits**
Phone: 979-845-2178
Fax: 979-862-4885
- **Payroll**
Phone: 979-845-3636
Fax: 979-845-9329
- **Training**
Phone: 979-845-4766
Fax: 979-862-4885

LINKS

- **AG Program HR:**
aghr.tamu.edu/default.htm
- **Employment:**
aghr.tamu.edu/employment.htm
- **Benefits:**
aghr.tamu.edu/benefits.htm
- **Ag Program Directory:**
agdirectory.tamu.edu/
- **Payroll:** aghr.tamu.edu/pay.htm
- **Forms (Alphabetical List):**
<http://agservices.tamu.edu/forms/>


TRS Online Account Access is Here!

TRS active members can now view their most recent Annual Statement of Account and calculate retirement annuity estimates through the TRS website.

You must have a password to access the information. TRS members may request a password by downloading the following form from the TRS website and then mailing it to TRS:

http://www.trs.state.tx.us/About_TRS/TRSONline_AccountAccess.htm





COUNTY PROGRAMS HR CORNER

Staff:

Dan Bogart	979-845-3708
Jennifer Humphries ..	979-845-7810
Sissy Jackson	979-845-3708
Kim Orta	979-845-7866
Dana Daugherty.....	979-845-7207
Barbara Bracken	979-862-7197
Anna Dean	979-845-7880
FAX	979-458-1046

Silent Auction for the 2002 Employee Charitable Campaign



Employees of the Agriculture Program Human Resources and Payroll offices will be conducting the second annual silent auction in support of the 2002 Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC).

Notice of the auction is being posted early so staff may be thinking about what they might want to donate or hand make for the auction.

The auction will be held in the Conference Room of the Centeq Research Building, 1500 Research Parkway, College Station (West Campus), on October 2-4. Items will be on display in the conference room. Employees may come by to view the items

and place their bids. Phone bids will be accepted on Friday, **October 4, 1-3 p.m.**, by calling 458-0063. Photos of auction items will be on the Agriculture Program website—address to be released at a later date. Locally residing employees are encouraged to participate as both donors and bidders in this very worthy charitable event. All proceeds from the auction will go directly to the State Employees Charitable Campaign. If you would like to help with the auction, please contact:
Pat Onstott (p-onstott@tamu.edu, 845-7802).



I'd Rather Be FISHing

The motto of Playfair Corporation, a management consulting firm, is: "If you take yourself too seriously, there's an excellent chance you will wind up seriously ill!" In fact, in the last decade there has been actual medical and scientific research to document that laughter and play can have a physical beneficial effect on health. Did you re- times of hearty entire muscular system relaxes?



Goofing off is in the eye of the beholder. Having fun may merely be a way of expressing joy

for a satisfying work situation, dealing productively with stress or taking a break from a difficult task.

Having fun at work can be beneficial for morale and productivity and humanizes the workplace. For an example of how putting fun into your work can create a totally different environment, you will want to contact Human Resources Office and ask for "FISH!". If you haven't already heard, the film FISH! is about a fish market that has been transformed by changing the attitude of their employees and developing a whole new philosophy of work.



Training Room

Ever wished you knew more about something and thought that you would get to it "someday"? The training center in the HR office is working hard to provide you with these training opportunities – to make the "someday" turn into "today" and the wishing into reality. We are offering training to assist you in your lifelong learning process to help you maintain or improve your basic job skills, and to further your development as a productive employee and member of society. Training offerings for the early summer 2002 is scheduled as follows:

June 25 Workers' Compensation Insurance - Bob Hensz

July 30 Basic Supervisory Skills - Steve Schulze

TTVN sites for this training may be found at: <http://agtraining.tamu.edu/ttvnsite.htm>. Handouts for each training session will be linked through the Ag training web site at: <http://agtraining.tamu.edu>



In addition, TAMU is offering a number of courses through the Employee Development Office. The complete course catalog for these courses can be found at:

<http://www.tamu.edu/hrd/ed/catalog.pdf>. To attend these courses, just register and show up. (Note: some of these have a small fee for some of the basic instruments/materials used in the course, however, that is the only charge for the course.)

In addition, Computing and Information Services offers a number of courses, the listing of which can be found linked through: <http://traincenter.tamu.edu>. These will provide training in technology related areas - software, etc.



Attention Faculty! Did you know that there are free workshops that will help you get your course materials on-line with WebCT and in other ways too? Instructional Technology Services (ITS), [formerly Learning On-Line Team (LOT)] is offering recurring workshops in WebCT, visual editors, Camtasia/multimedia, and other on-line course related development. They also offer some workshops presented by commercial vendors at reduced costs. Interested? Check it all out at: <http://lot.tamu.edu>. Then click on the "Workshop Schedule" for the various offerings.

Helping Employees Succeed — Strategies for Supervisors to Help their Employees Succeed*



Be an Example

Model strong work habits through efficient, dedicated work practices. Let your own approach to daily work be an example from which employees can learn.



Be Flexible

Though it is important to have high standards on the job, it is also important to be flexible in order to accommodate employees' personal obligations.



Communicate Expectations

Communicate the job standards, requirements, and your expectations to your employees. One should not assume these are self-evident to employees, even though they may seem obvious to you.



Give Feedback Frequently

Provide consistent and appropriate feedback to your employees. Employees benefit from feedback in job performance, providing it is communicated with a positive spirit and the goal of helping the employee to succeed.



Be Fair

Supervisors who are too lenient or view employees as children are not doing them any favors. Treat employees as you would like to be treated in a similar situation.



Train, Train, Train!

Take the time to train your employees in important work skills, attitudes, and habits such as time management, phone skills, quality service practices, and handling difficult situations.



Be a Team Player

As the team leader, develop and nurture the unique contributions of each team member. Take a global perspective.



Give Recognition

When you see an employee "going the extra mile", acknowledge this in front of other staff and peers. People need to feel appreciated.



Share the Vision

Have regular staff meetings with your employees, and inform them how their work fits into a larger purpose of the unit.



Be an Educator

To the degree that we each contribute to the lives of others, we are all educators. Do your part in helping your unit to produce quality employees.

* Adapted from Helping Students Succeed, Vanderbilt Univ., Student Employment Office, SFA, 1999

Finding Time to Cook is a Crock

In today's hustle and bustle, dual working households it's next to impossible to find time to cook a decent dinner. Eating out is an option, but it gets expensive and most restaurant menus are not the healthiest of entrées. So my suggestion is to pull out that old crock-pot or purchase one from the local superstore and put it to use tomorrow. Dinner can be made every night using a crock-pot and recipes can only be limited to the imagination. And lets face it; you can't beat the smell of dinner cooking when you walk in the door after a long day at work.



Here is one recipe to get you started. Soon you'll be able to come up with your own.

Spaghetti Sauce (serves 4)

1 lb. ground meat or meat substitute (cook on stove until brown before adding)
 1 can of tomato sauce
 1 can of diced tomatoes
 ½ red bell pepper
 ½ green bell pepper
 ½ onion
 ½ cup red wine (preferred)
 1 clove of garlic
 Salt & pepper to taste (& other spices of choice)

Pour can of tomato sauce, drained diced tomatoes; add chopped peppers and garlic, 1/2 cup red wine if preferred into crock-pot. Add meat once browned. Set temperature on low and leave until return home for dinner (about 8 hours).

Here are a few web links for more crock-pot recipes:

<http://southernfood.about.com/library/crock/blcpidx.htm>
<http://dmoz.org/Home/Cooking/Crock-Pot/>
<http://www.crock-pot.com>

2002-03 Annual Enrollment is Just Around the Corner!

The 2002-03 annual benefit enrollment period is July 1-31. Employees will begin receiving their annual enrollment packets in the next few weeks. The packet will include a Decision 2002 book, a Personal Benefits Summary and a schedule of meetings. There are significant plan changes this year so please take the time to review the benefit information in your packet and to attend an annual enrollment meeting.

The A&M Care 250 and 500 plans will merge into a single plan (A&M Care 350). The A&M System will offer a new catastrophic coverage health plan (A&M Care 1250) that will require participants to pay a much larger share of the costs in exchange for very low monthly premiums. Employees currently enrolled in A&M Care 250 or A&M Care 500 will be automatically enrolled in the A&M Care 350 plan effective September 1, 2002, unless a different plan is selected.

The Texas A&M University System will no longer offer PacifiCare, HMO Blue and Aetna after August 31, 2002. If you are currently enrolled in one of these plans you will be automatically enrolled in A&M Care 350 on September 1, 2002 unless a different plan is selected.

Health plan premiums will increase for FY03. See <http://sago.tamu.edu/shro/newsnotes/02may.htm> for a list of next plan year premiums as well as information about individual plan changes that may help you make informed decisions regarding your group insurance coverage effective September 1, 2002.

For more information call the Agriculture Program Human Resources Office at 979-845-2423.

