

## LABOR MANAGEMENT

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A California study that interviewed 265 agricultural workers offers some insight as to why workers become dissatisfied with their jobs and quit. Low pay was the reason most commonly cited as a reason for quitting (see chart for additional reasons).

Some of the workers involved in this study were interviewed and asked what their bosses could do to improve employee satisfaction. The most common answers were:

- Improve communication
- Slow the work pace
- Increase wages
- Give regular performance evaluations
- Improve job assignments & instructions
- Be more helpful to employees

Gregory E. Billikopf, the author of the study, offers these recommendations for managers (and consultants) on improving employees' job satisfaction.

1. Managers/supervisors should show enthusiasm for their own jobs. They should continue learning and share the new knowledge with employees.
2. Reduce the distance between managers and workers by allowing for open communication and fostering respect in the workplace. Managers should also encourage questions and comments from employees on a regular basis.
3. Compliment workers when they do a good job. Listen to an employee's perspective before punishing. If criticism is necessary, ALWAYS direct the criticism at a specific behavior, NOT the person.
4. Help managers remove job obstacles for their employees by offering suggestions to organize activities and eliminate bottlenecks. If applicable, offer to help train workers struggling with a task.
5. Encourage managers to keep bathrooms and other employee areas clean and well stocked. Cold drinking water is appreciated throughout the year, but particularly during the warmer months.
6. Help clients establish an organized protocol for handling complaints, particularly those that involve harassment, discrimination, or abusive treatment.

Additional suggestions to help managers motivate workers and improve their job performance and satisfaction include:

1. Expect workers to be creative, responsible, and thorough.
2. Establish realistic, measurable goals for workers and give them constant feedback on their performance. **PUT THE GOALS IN WRITING.**
3. Communicate expectations by giving them a specific, measurable list of expectations. Create a similar list for assessing employee performance.
4. Set workers up to succeed by matching their personal strengths to job responsibilities that complement their personalities. Compliment successes as quickly and frequently as you criticize shortcomings.
5. Believe in your employees and trust them to do their jobs on their own. False praise is quickly recognized by employees and is not appreciated.
6. Empower employees and give them responsibility. When they realize their importance and the trust that is placed in them, the usual response is improved job performance.

