

**MAST**  
**Human Resource Management**

**Session 1: Overview and  
Communication**

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**Types of Agricultural Risk**

- Price
- Yield
- Legal
- Human Resource
- *others*

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# Why the new focus on HR Risk

- Economies of size in agriculture
  - larger businesses equal more people
- More lawsuit-happy environment
- More technically-advanced and potentially dangerous business practices
- Tight Labor Market
- *others*

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## Your HR concerns will vary according to...

- Business Size
  - Different laws apply when businesses reach certain thresholds
- Industry
  - Some standards, such as minimum wage, do not apply to “production” agriculture enterprises
- Location
  - Local, State, and Federal laws and regulations will vary so business owners should know what applies where

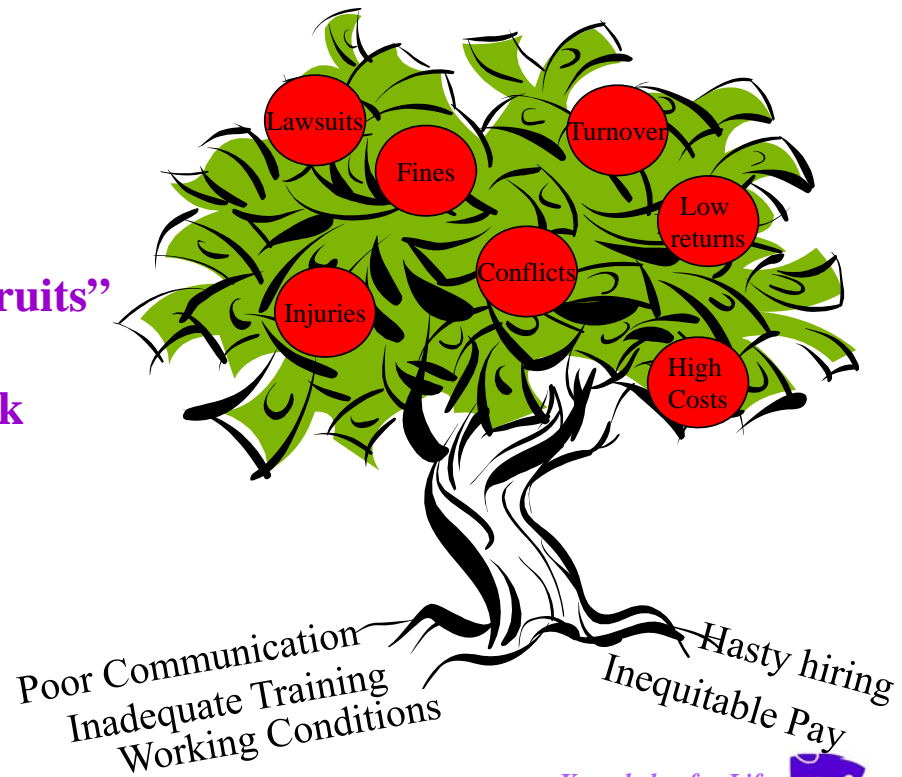
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## The “Roots & Fruits” of HR Risk



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## Some practices that can minimize HR risks

1. Communicate more
2. Provide adequate training
3. Offer fair and constant feedback
4. Implement and maintain a safety program
5. Make sound decisions when hiring
6. Have a good attorney
7. Always see things from both points of view

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# The communication challenge

- The more people involved, the more distance covered, the harder it will be to communicate
- Even in small businesses, communication is usually the biggest HR challenge they face.



# Communication is important...

- Because miscommunication costs us
  - money
  - time
  - opportunity
- Because miscommunication increases our exposure to potential risks



# Two types of Communication

- “Hard Communication”
  - the practice of conveying facts and information
  - has very little to do with emotions
  - can be done, in part, by using written instruments
- “Soft Communication”
  - the practice of conveying feelings and emotions
  - very sensitive to personalities
  - is usually accomplished through honest conversations

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## “Hard” Communication is easiest for most people

- Deals with information--not emotions
- Can be as cut-and-dried as any regular business practice
- Requires a time commitment and investment in resources
- To seriously reduce HR risk, a business must have these tools

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# You never want it to look like you're making up the rules as you go along.

- Use clearly defined policies and procedures
  - Job Descriptions
  - Handbooks
- These items communicate to employees
  - what you expect from them
  - what they can expect from you



## Handbooks: *personnel policies*

- Courtesy and expectations toward other employees
- Probationary period
- Disciplinary practices
- Policies on
  - Attendance
  - Breaks
  - Work scheduling
  - Use of equipment and tools



## **Handbooks:** *compensation and benefits*

- Pay and paydays
  - what about advances?
- Vacation amount and scheduling
  - who is eligible and when?
- Sick leave
- Insurance benefits
  - exactly what's included and who's eligible?
- Retirement program
  - help everyone fight through the red tape

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## **Job Descriptions:**

- Basic framework for all HRM practices
- Outline the entire position
- Always subject to change--should evolve with the employee and the job
- Perhaps most importantly: establish goals and objectives

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## **Good “hard” communication can usually be tracked to good systems.**

- Information communication can be done through
  - routine checks and balances
  - established processes
  - non-verbal tools (notes, signs, etc.)
- Never underestimate the power of a bulletin board
- Starts with Orientation and Training

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## **“Soft” communication can only be accomplished by**

### **Turning on the Hazard Lights**

*If you do it, you can get away with almost anything.*

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# Improving “Soft” Communication

- Remove barriers
- Maintain composure
- Find a “common language”
- Establish communication as a core value
  - routine
  - expected
  - rewarded

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## The test of communication

Everyone in your operation  
should be able to say:

- I know what’s going on.
- I know what to expect.
- I know how I am doing.
- I know how we are doing.

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# Questions?

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