


# **Background For Success In Human Resource Management**

**Dr. Bernie Erven**

***JUNE 3, 2010***






# Background for Success in Human Resource Management

---

Dr. Bernie Erven  
Erven HR Services and  
Professor Emeritus  
Ohio State University  
614-888-9953 erven.1@osu.edu



## Introduction

---

- The theme – Getting things done through people
- Accepting responsibility rather than blaming
- Preparing for success



## Outline

---

**Part I:** Planning to Meet Your HR Goals

**Part II:** Building Your Reputation as a Place to Work

**Part III:** Becoming a Better Boss

**Part IV:** Designing Jobs that Motivate and Challenge Employees

**Part V:** Value and Common Sense of Job Descriptions



## Part I

---

Planning to Meet Your  
Human Resource Goals



## Introduction

---

Success in Ag businesses depends on:

1. Production management
2. Marketing management
3. Financial management
4. Human resource management



## Mistaken view of the role of HR management

---

1. Do the paper work
2. "Find more people with common sense who want to work."
3. Figure out how much we have to pay.
4. Motivate employees
5. "Fix the problems with our headache employee"



## HR manager's tasks

---

1. Create a vision of HR success
2. Develop HR strategic goals
3. Craft an organizational structure that supports HR vision and strategic goals
4. Put in place the "right" HR practices
5. Assure that everyone in the business is "equipped" to handle his or her HR management responsibilities



## Task 1 – Create a vision of HR success

---

A vision:

- Is a broad statement that guides action
- Is not essential, i.e., a business can function without a vision
- Is specific to each business
- Can be changed from time to time
- Provides criteria for measuring progress



## Using vision to help answer a practical question

---

Our vision: *Outstanding employees*

“Do you prefer to hire four excellent employees back-to-back who stay an average of 5 years or one “okay” employee who stays 20 years?”

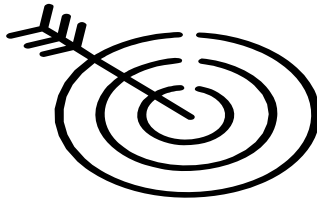


## Another vision

---

“Our most important asset is the people we employ and the people in our family. These people are an investment not a cost.”

Did the best archer on the team shoot this arrow?



The take home message about vision

“Having a vision of what you want to accomplish helps you succeed as an HR manager.”



## Task 2 – Develop strategic, tactical & operational goals

---

- HR goals are future conditions, circumstances or situations desired by the manager
- The most helpful HR goals are SMART
  1. Specific
  2. Measurable
  3. Attainable
  4. Rewarded
  5. Timed




## Examples of goals

---

1. Strategic goal: *To create an opportunity for my daughter to join the business as a manager and investor*
2. Tactical goal: *Decrease turnover from 15% to 5% by the end of 2013*
3. Operational goal: *Decrease lost days caused by injury on the job from 75 to 50 to 5 in the next 3 years*





## The take home message about goals:

---

HR managers with specific goals accomplish more than those who have only vague goals



## Task 3 – Craft an organizational structure

---

- Every business has an organizational structure: formal or informal, confused or orderly, understood or not understood, helpful or hurtful
- Human resource considerations should play a role in deciding on an appropriate organizational structure



## Organization requires choices

---

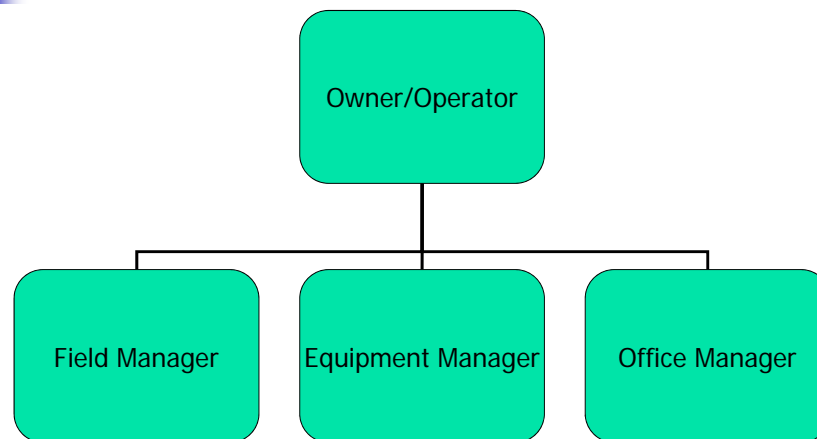
To illustrate:

- The usual vertical approach
- A “me” approach
- A team approach

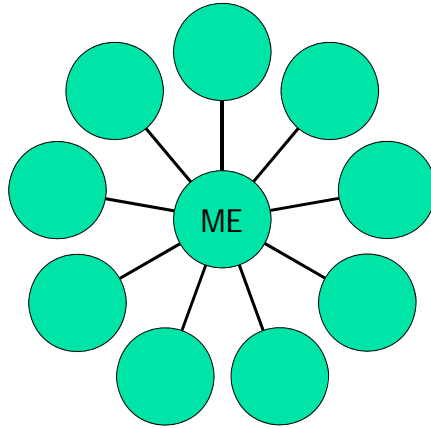


## Example of the usual vertical structure

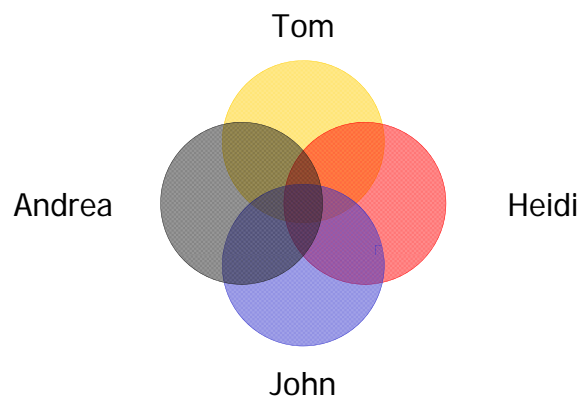
---



## The "me" approach



## A team approach





## The take home message about organizational structure

---

“Your structure is either an asset or a liability; it is never an unimportant detail.”



## Task 4 -- Put in place the “right” HR practices

---

- Widely accepted HR practices and procedures have been developed for large non-agricultural businesses
- These practices can be tailored to fit ranch and ag businesses
- Further tailoring is necessary to fit individual businesses and circumstances



## HR practices in preparation for hiring:

---


1. HR planning
2. Job analysis
3. Job design
4. Job descriptions
5. Employee handbook or written summary of key policies and procedures



## Hiring practices

---

1. Building a pool of applicants
2. Application forms and application process
3. Evaluation of applicants including interviewing
4. Job offer



## Practices to “equip” employees to succeed

---


1. Orientation
2. Training of new employees
3. Training of experienced employees for new responsibilities
4. Retraining



## Ongoing practices

---

1. Safety in the workplace
2. Communication
3. Motivation
4. Conflict resolution
5. Discipline and discharge
6. Compensation
7. Benefits



## A pervasive practice affecting all the previous HR practices

---


1. Operating within the federal and state laws affecting employment and the employer/employee relationship
2. Staying attuned to the specific provisions for ag businesses
3. Adjusting to changes in the law



## The take home message about "right" practices

---

"Any one of the procedures can be critical to HR success or failure. There are no unimportant practices."



## Task 5 – Assure that every HR manager/leader is trained

---

- HR management is important to management at three levels:
  - Top management
  - Middle management
  - Working leaders
- Outstanding experience at one level does not adequately prepare one to succeed at the next level, *e.g., best worker is not ready to be a working leader without HR training; best working leader is not ready to be a middle manager without HR training*



## The take home message about training HR managers

---

“Outstanding success at one level in the business does not by itself prepare a person to succeed as an HR manager at the next level.”





## Part II

---

### Building Your Reputation as a Place to Work



## Introduction

---

The good news is that you own your reputation with your employees. You:


- Hire them
- Orient and train them
- Build relationships with them
- Reward them
- Help them create opportunities for themselves



## What do your employees want?

---

- Fairness
- Opportunity
- Explicitness about your expectations
- Information
- Sense of being important
- Feedback about performance and how to improve
- Appreciation
- Both monetary and non-monetary rewards



## Creating a “good place to work” starts with the job

---

- No job is perfect
- Managers can design jobs or step aside and let employees design their jobs
- Managers cannot ignore the work that must get done
- Understanding an employees knowledge, skills and abilities is essential



## Job design guidelines

---

Employees:

- Use a variety of skills
- Do a total job whenever possible
- Understand the significance of the job

Boss:

- Gives responsibility, challenge, freedom and opportunity to be creative
- Provides feedback



## Building relationships

---

- Being thought of as a good place to work comes from building relationships with employees
- The following guidelines can help but can never guarantee a good relationship



## 1. Like, enjoy and appreciate your employees

---

- Bring a positive attitude
- Understand that employees sense your attitude
- Work to prevent a single employee from poisoning your attitude
- Think about your most valued employees



## 2. Use written job descriptions

---

- Help your employees understand their jobs
- Satisfy their curiosity about what others do
- Base training and performance evaluations on job descriptions



### 3. Provide training

---

- Train, train, train
- Ask yourself what you enjoy doing that you cannot do well
- Treat training as an investment in people
- Expect training to save you time



### 4. Show trust and be fair

---

- Show trust by delegating authority and responsibility
- Use trust to build a sense of “team”
- Free yourself for most important supervisory responsibilities
- Avoid bias, dishonesty and injustice



## 5. Catch people doing things right

---

- Catch people doing things right and say thank you
- Emphasize the positive day-by-day and especially during performance appraisals
- Combine talk about problems with plans for improvement



## 6. Develop pride

---


- Cultivate employees having pride in each other
- Build pride in your company
- Show outsiders that you are pleased with your employees



## 7. Celebrate successes

---

- Celebrate your employees' successes
- Reinforce the notion: "We work together; we celebrate together."
- Use celebration to express your appreciation



## 8. Communicate clearly and often

---

- Understand that employees want to communicate
- Don't wait for employees to ask
- Create communication opportunities:
  - Frequent contacts with each employee
  - Phones, radios, chalkboard, message boxes
  - Staff meetings
  - At least annual performance reviews



## 9. Compensate fairly

---

- Make the monetary compensation fair
- Provide exceptional non-monetary benefits
- Provide extraordinary informal perks



## 10. Promote from within

---

- Use promotions to recognize contributions
- Use promotions to show confidence in employees
- Show employees they have advancement opportunities





## 11. Make the business family-friendly

---

- Understand employees' family frustrations
- Anticipate family caused frustrations and pressures
- Help employees deal with their family responsibilities
- Provide nontraditional assistance



## 12. Be proud of advancing employees

---

- Be proud when employees out grow the business
- Accept the disappointment of losing one of your best employees
- Turn the loss to opportunities for other employees
- Work to have each employee leave with a positive attitude



## Improving your reputation as a place to work

---

1. Ask the tough question: *Am I committed to the necessary changes?*
2. Determine your current strengths and weaknesses as a place to work
3. Seek input from your employees and other employers.
4. Develop a plan for turning each one of your weaknesses into a strength.



## Part III

---

### Becoming a Better Boss



## Introduction

---

- No supervisor or employer likes being known as a “poor boss.”
- Yet many bosses suffer from:
  - Bad reputations
  - A well-known history of treating people badly
  - Lack of support from people above and below them
- Why?
  - *The choices they have made and continue to make!*



## A note about the title

---

- Some highly effective managers take offense to being called the **boss**
- Alternative titles: **coach, facilitator, leader, coordinator, team leader, chief, director, manager**
- **“Boss”** in these slides because it is term most often in employees’ minds



## Is it really about choices?

---

1. Think of the person you would least like to have as your boss.
2. What two traits best describe this person?
3. Which of these traits can a determined manager/leader change?



## Two important facts

---

1. Some people have never experienced an outstanding boss!
2. Easier for some people to blame circumstances and others for their faults instead of learning to make better choices



## A dozen areas of choice

---

1. Envision **success**
2. **Hire** well
3. Welcome **change**
4. Emphasize **communication**
5. Have clear **procedures, policies and rules**
6. Show **enthusiasm**
7. Be **fair**
8. Show **empathy**
9. Display **trust through delegation**
10. Continue **learning and training**
11. Be **flexible**
12. Provide **performance feedback**



## 1. Envision success

---

- Have a vision of what is necessary for your company's success & yours
- Seek stability in strategic goals, direction & organizational structure
- Insist on high standards for all important tasks
- Treat mediocrity like the poison that it is



## 2. Hire well

---

- Poor hiring decisions increase employee turnover, frustrate the best employees and risk member satisfaction
- Hire to meet organizational needs
- In hiring, emphasize:
  - self-motivation
  - previous accomplishments
  - demonstrated willingness to learn
  - interpersonal skills
- Planning and careful follow through on hiring basics lead to success



## 3. Welcome change

---

- Cherish your change-agent role
- Accept that change is difficult for most people
- Lead by showing your willingness to change
- Give timely information about the **what**, **why** and **when** of change
- Understand why employees are resisting change & then address their concerns
- Allow time for changes to be accepted



## 4. Emphasize communication

---


- Make communication the key to building relationships with employees
- Improve your understanding of communication and communication skills; focus on ability to **send clear messages** and to **listen**
- Send important messages over & over
- Vary how you send messages
- Make staff meetings regular, interesting & useful
- Encourage questions; don't wait for employees to ask



## How serious is each of these communication barriers for you?

---

1. Muddled messages
2. Stereotyping
3. Wrong channel
4. Language
5. Lack of feedback
6. Poor listening skills
7. Personal characteristics
8. Disorganization
9. Lack of communication aids
10. Place



## 5. Have clearly understood procedures, policies & rules

---

- Teach procedures for doing critical tasks
- Make procedures understandable, practical and as simple as possible
- Have clear policies and rules to guide employee behavior
- Explain the whys behind procedures, policies & rules
- Keep [job descriptions & employee handbook](#) current and useful
- Welcome employee input on how procedures, policies & rules can be improved



## 6. Show enthusiasm

---

- Display lively interest in your job, colleagues and their careers
- Make your enthusiasm contagious
- Make believe you are enthusiastic until your bad moods pass
- Take advantage of your charisma (if you are lucky enough to have it)





## 7. Be fair

---

- General guideline
  - Avoid bias, dishonesty and injustice
- Discipline
  - Have consistent enforcement of rules
  - Base discipline decisions on facts while avoiding gossip and rumor
- Rewards
  - Reward on the basis of merit not need & favoritism
  - Reward both formally and informally



## 8. Show empathy for the people you supervise

---

*Empathy – Understanding another person's situation, feelings and attitudes*

- Non job pressures, e.g., family illness, marital problems, family financial pressures
- Bureaucratic mumbo jumbo, e.g., not wanting to submit all required reports
- Disappointment, e.g., disappointment with not getting a promotion or an expected raise in pay



## 9. Show trust through delegation

---

- Believe in your colleagues' word, integrity, strengths and assurances
- Delegate as much authority and responsibility as circumstances will allow
- Treat your own word as an enforceable contract
- Deliver more than you promised



## 10. Continue learning and training

---

- Be humble about how much you know and hesitant to criticize others who know less than you
- Recognize that to be competent, you must never stop learning
- Take full advantage of opportunities to train those you supervise
- Be a patient teacher in helping others



## 11. Be flexible

---

- Adjust your leadership style for each person supervised to fit his or her experience, capabilities, psychological needs and self-confidence
- Incorporate judgment into rule enforcement
- Be prepared to respond appropriately to crises



## 12. Provide performance feedback

---

- Most employees want to know:
  - “How am I doing?”
  - “How can I improve?”
- Foundation for effective feedback
  - Written job descriptions
  - Clear performance expectations
  - Orientation and training
  - Frequent informal communication about performance
  - Timely follow up to performance problems
- Methods
  - A form
  - Essays
  - Oral “3-2” with a written summary



## What has not been said?

---

- “Employees will respect you as a boss if you work harder than them.”
- “Fear is a good motivator.”
- “Not being able to pay enough is your biggest HR challenge.”
- “Being respected is more important than being liked.”



## Three difficult situations for even the best bosses

---

1. Supervising a buddy or close friend
2. Supervising your elders
3. Supervising a chronic under-performer



## Difficult situation #1 – Supervising a buddy

---

- “Do I want to be my employees’ buddy or boss?”
- Supervisors have the choice
- Employees do not
- The challenge is clear; the decision is not



## In friendly & informal organizations:

---

- The tendency is to be buddy not boss
- Seems easier to be buddy
- Employees assumed to prefer the buddy choice



## The guideline for most businesses

---

Be friendly with all employees;  
be buddies with no employees.



## Dealing with personal problems in friendly business

---

1. Avoid getting involved in personal problems
2. Be prepared to deal with real employee crises



## Difficult situation #2 – Supervising your elders

---

- People who are older and/or more experienced often challenge new bosses
- Problem is more closely tied to **perception** than reality
- Traits other than age quickly come to dominate supervisor/employee relationships



## Guidelines for supervising your elders

---

1. Work hard at becoming an excellent supervisor
2. Minimize the emphasis on age gaps
3. Depend more on relationships than rules
4. Be fair
5. Respect what others know that you don't



## Difficult Situation #3 – Chronic under-performers

---

- Disappointing employees who do not perform badly enough to be fired
- Chronic means there is a history of years not months
- **Actions that have failed:** patience, impatience, self-correction, anger, threats



## Causes before cures

---

- **Basic challenge** – Understanding the causes of under-performance
- **The reality** – Under-performers typically do not know or reveal causes of their problems
- **Causes** – Search for underlying causes of under-performance rather than simply blaming workers or jumping to easy, superficial or stereotypical explanations





## Concluding thought about under-performers

---

- **Do something!**
- Refuse to allow the problem of an under-performer to fester
- Stop the negative effects on the organization, the worker's happiness the worker's livelihood and co-workers



## Take home messages about being a better boss

---

1. You will be about as good a boss as you choose to be!
2. Your human resource management/leadership choices are more important than your natural abilities.
3. A passion for improvement, successes and mistakes of other bosses, training, experience and coaching combine to make you a better boss



## Part IV

---

### Designing Jobs that Motivate and Challenge Employees



## Introduction

---

- Both employees and employers benefit from well-designed job
- Poorly designed jobs discourage, frustrate and bore employees
- When an employer fails to design jobs, employees fill the void



## Outline

---

1. Job analysis
2. Characteristics of well-designed jobs
3. Fine tuning jobs through job enrichment and adjusted work schedules



## Before and after job design

---

Job analysis → Job design → Job description



## Job Analysis

---

- Process of obtaining the information necessary for job design
- Information is required about existing jobs as well as new jobs



## Information sources

---

1. People now doing the job
  - They understand it best
  - Often have ideas about how job can be improved
  - Caution → Employees may think job analysis is performance evaluation
2. Supervisors and managers
3. Outside sources



## Necessary data

---


- Tasks, duties and responsibilities
- Equipment needed
- Knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences and licenses to do the job
- Performance standards
- Physical demands



## Examples of questions answered in job analysis

---

1. Which decisions about truck maintenance are made by the driver?
2. Who decides the feeding schedule?
3. Who is responsible for orienting and training new employees?
4. How much can employee spend for parts without prior approval?



## Importance of job analysis increases with:

---

- Increase in number of employees
- Increasing complexity of jobs
- Greater mixture of new and experienced employees
- Decreasing labor efficiency caused by muddled job protocols, procedures and policies



## Job design

---

Structuring jobs to:

- Improve employee satisfaction
- Improve efficiency



## Job design facts

---

- Not every person fits a job; not every job fits a person
- The work still has to get done
- No job is perfect
- Job design should address the negative stereotypes of work



## Desirable job characteristics

---

1. Job requires a variety of skills
2. Employee does a total job
3. Employee understands the significance of the job
4. Employee has responsibility, challenge, freedom and opportunity
5. Employee receives feedback



## Ergonomics

---

- Traditional approach → Worker adjusts to the machine, i.e., one size fits all
- Ergonomics → Machine fits the person, e.g., adjustable height, comfortable work clothes, flexible lighting



## Ergonomics and motivation

---

- Equipment, clothes and surroundings that don't "fit" dissatisfy workers
- Dissatisfied workers lose motivation
- Solution rests with the employer not the employee





## Job enrichment

---

- Responding to an employee's need for responsibility, variety and challenge
- Starts with knowing employees' abilities, skills and needs
- Job enrichment **can** further decrease an employee's motivation



## Job enrichment possibilities

---

- Make a job more difficult
- Assign challenging new tasks that require an employee to learn
- Delegate responsibility and authority
- Ask the person to become an "expert" in something
- Give employee data to analyze a problem



## Tips for success with job enrichment

---

1. Discover which employees have high-level motivation needs: **achievement, self-esteem and self-fulfillment**
2. Provide training and time to learn to handle new responsibilities
3. Adjust monetary and non-monetary rewards



## Changing work schedules

---

- 8-5, five days per week not required by law
- Be creative to fit your employees' needs



## Some work schedule changes to consider

---

- Flextime
- Compressed workweek
- Job sharing



## Flextime

---

- Flexible beginning and ending times
  - One workers comes at 6:00 a.m. and leaves at 3:00
  - Another comes at 9:00 a.m. and leaves at 6:00
- Flexible break times



## Does flextime fit your business?

---

- Works best when employees have individual responsibilities
- Doesn't fit jobs that require several people working together
- Employees like control over their work and family schedules
- Employers like reduction in tardiness and absenteeism



## Compressed work week

---

- Fewer days worked; more hours/day
- Some examples:
  - 4 days/week x 10 hours/day = 40 hours
  - 3 days/week x 12 hours/day = 36 hours
  - 4 days/week x 12 hours/day = 48 hours
- Doesn't fit all jobs
- Some employees lack necessary stamina



## Job sharing

---

- Two or more people share a single job
- Example:
  - One full-time job converted to three part-time positions
  - Three people share full-time pay
  - Arrange their own work schedules
  - Recruit their own replacements



## Concluding comments

---

- Each job is designed by someone
- Employees appreciate efforts to make their jobs motivational and challenging
- Employer's choice:
  - Take advantage of the opportunity provided by job design **or**
  - Hope employees design what is best for them and your business



## Part V

---

### The Value and Common Sense of Job Descriptions



## Introduction – The Employee Perspective

---


- Most employees in small businesses **do not have** written job descriptions
- Most employees **want** a written job description



## Introduction – The Employer Perspective

---

- Most managers in small businesses think written job descriptions would be impractical for them
- But most managers who use written job descriptions don't want to eliminate them



## Introduction – The Issue

---

Employer-employee communication



## Employees wonder:

---

- “How am I doing?”
- “Why wasn’t I told what my job really would be?”
- “Why am I blamed for not doing what I didn’t know I was supposed to do?”



## Employers’ fears:

---

- Employees not wanting to do something that is not in their job descriptions
- Not being able to get everything in a job description





## Job descriptions can:

---

- Improve employer/employee communication
- Clarify duties and responsibilities
- Provide performance standards
- Help sell jobs to applicants
- Improve training programs



## Job descriptions can: (Continued)

---

- Motivate employees to advance in their careers
- Help establish employer's right to take corrective action when duties are not performed as required
- Reduce chances of litigation
- Help in litigation



## The groundwork for job descriptions

---

- **Job analysis:** Duties, tasks or activities of the job
- **Job design:** Structure and enrich jobs
- **Qualifications:** Knowledge, skills, abilities and physical demands that need to be satisfied for success in the position



## Format for a job description

---

- No standard format
- Develop a format that fits your business
- Consistency within a company more important than among companies



## The parts of a job description

---

- Job title
- Job summary
- Job identification
- Job duties
- Compensation (Optional in job description)
- Qualifications (Optional in job description)



## Job title

---

- Communicates in 1-3 words what the job is
- Seek to provide some indication of level of the position, e.g., Head Milker
- Give psychological importance to title by providing status
- Put honesty and accuracy above impressiveness
- Incorporate consistency across the company, e.g., supervisor means same thing in all parts of the company and is different from manager



## Job summary

---

- Brief overview of the job stated in narrative form
- Distinguishes one job from another without any confusing detail



## Job identification

---

- Include at least:
- Supervisor or title of supervisor
  - Department or area
  - Date job description was last revised
  - Exempt or nonexempt status



## Job duties or Essential functions

---

- Begin each duty with an action verb
- Arrange in order of importance
- Include percentages of time to help communicate relative importance
- Include an elastic clause: *"Assist with other duties for the good of co-workers and the business."*
- Include only essential duties (ADA)



## Job description tips

---

- Involve current and previous job holders, supervisors and perhaps co-workers
- Commit time in the short-run to save time in the long-run
- Borrow ideas from other companies
- Take advantage of vacancies to create new job descriptions
- Keep job descriptions current and accurate



## Job description tips (Continued)

---


- Write duties before selecting title and writing job specifications
- Do not confuse a duty with how to accomplish a duty
- Limit duties to 8 or fewer and sub-duties to 4 or fewer
- Use terse, direct and simple wording
- Consider using a job description software package



## Keeping job descriptions current and accurate

---

1. Make update of the job description a part of the annual performance review
2. Ask the person in the position how the job description needs to be changed to better describe what she or he is now doing



## A recipe for making job descriptions a waste of time

---

- Write them poorly using vague language and misleading terminology
- Let them become outdated
- Fail to use them in hiring, orienting, training and performance feedback
- Make them important to the HR manager but not to the supervisor and person in the job
- Include violations of the law



## Key take home points

---

1. Primary motivation for job descriptions is to facilitate communication
2. **Simple** is better than complex, **less** is better than more, **current** is better than stale
3. Time is required for job descriptions to become a HRM strength
4. Job descriptions signal professionalism



## Contact information

---

Dr. Bernie Erven

[erven.1@osu.edu](mailto:erven.1@osu.edu)

614-888-9953

5987 Rocky Rill Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43235