

Consider Business Needs Before Hiring

Your small business has launched. Things are going well. Your day is spent working with your customers or restocking shelves.

Yet you have so many other things to do. Nights and weekends are your time for ordering, recordkeeping and planning. Family members, who you hoped to spend more time with, see less and less of you. And when you do take time to be with your family, your business suffers in big and small ways.

More importantly, you have tapped family and friends to help you with your business, but they have no more time to offer or are running and hiding when you approach.

Is now the time to hire your first employee?

“The decision to hire might be based on these and other signs,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “However, before making that first hire, you need to think about what you need in terms of help.”

A common first hire is a person who can handle routine tasks and customer contacts. The theory is that this will allow you, the owner, to focus on strategic planning and analysis. It also should provide you time to plan future growth.

“Taking this approach might work, but it also may not be the best use of new resources,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Your first employee should be someone who complements your skills and not duplicates them. You need a person who fills the gaps.”

“Maybe you have great customer skills, including the difficult task of helping potential customers see how your product or service can benefit them and then knowing how and when to ‘ask’ or close the deal,” he continued. “Giving that task to someone else may limit future growth.”

Thinking about how your first employee will add to your bottom line needs to be part of your decision also, says (Last name).

Other things to consider when hiring your first employee include:

- Understand that prior to even looking for your first employee, you must define the role you need filled.
- Know yourself and what you are willing to delegate. Understand that when hiring, you will need to give the person some authority and power. Typically, as the owner, you will feel comfortable doing that only in certain areas.
- Update your future growth plans, How long might you wait before hiring another employee? The longer the anticipated time until the next hire, the greater the need for you, as the owner, to consider which of your most crucial needs should be filled immediately. For example, if you anticipate hiring a second employee within a couple of

months, then you might look for a different set of skills in your first employee than if your next hire is one, two or more years away.

- Be willing to make a long-term commitment to a new employee. This first hire should be looked at as someone who will be with the company for a long time. Be prepared to commit and start out, from day one, with a growth plan for that new hire.
- Think differently about your business's opportunities and needs. You are about to become an employer and your business is beginning a new phase. .

Hiring an employee is a big step in the growth of a business. It indicates not only to you but to the outside community that your products and services are valued. It also shows you are being successful in sales. Turn these into a stream of news about your first hire and the success of your company in general.

This is a good time to get the advice of mentors or others who already have made the step or hiring their first employee. Check with your local chamber of commerce. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and Service Corps of Retired Executives, also can be valuable resources.

For more help, check with your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU's small-business support website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness and sign up for the monthly newsletter. More information can be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz and Twitter at @gmuske. Another resource is www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship.

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