

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Workforce Finders Keepers

Written by Jennifer Zurko, data compiled by Industry Insights

The scarcity of and the demand for more labor is the constant re-run of the same episode all of you are living in. It's an old story, but looking over the responses from this year's survey, you're doing a lot to try and alleviate the problem in different ways.

The first is retaining the good people you already have. Employee engagement has been a running theme when it comes operating a business (and in this issue, as well), so implementing ways to keep your staff challenged, productive and happy are key to maintaining a stable workforce.

The other is the use of seasonal worker programs like H-2A and H-2B. In a new chart, we asked growers about the methods they use to fill open positions and a large percentage have been using these programs to get workers. And in this year's open-ended question, we asked: *What steps are you taking to ensure that you have a reliable workforce into the future?*

There were quite a few common themes among the responses, including:

- Training and mentoring
- Offering a competitive compensation and benefits package
- Advocating for pay increases and bonuses
- Hiring strategically with better job descriptions and better onboarding
- Regular communication and updates
- Cross-training with other departments
- Hiring interns and partnering with local colleges
- Building a company culture that fosters respect

But quite a few mentioned utilizing H-2A, specifically saying that having these workers not only ensures that the work gets done, but that it also directly—and positively—impacts their full-time staff. The extra workload burden doesn't fall on them and it keeps things running smoothly during the busiest seasons. One respondent even said that they've been advocating for H-2A reform with their local and federal representatives. With the demand for seasonal workers continuing to increase and the current state of government, that's more important than ever.

Some other comments:

Administering an anonymous engagement survey to all employees each year utilizing feedback for decision making; retaining high performers with career paths and growth opportunities; continuing to emphasize care and

quality with our products; addressing performance issues early.

Continue to give raises annually; work with flexible schedules; try to have good equipment and help make the job fun.

I find taking the time to check references is one of the best ways to ensure which workers you want and helps with getting reliable workers. A good working environment also plays a huge part in retaining your workforce.

Listening to employees if they leave the company and take their suggestions/thoughts and act on them.

We work with the local Hispanic outreach groups. We sponsor events and donate to the organizations. In turn, they send referrals our way.

Setting up an evaluation system along with a pay matrix that takes inflation into account so employees know what they can expect for raises each year.

Something I find very important is work culture/atmosphere. If you provide a positive healthy environment for your staff, you will typically retain the right people. When you have the right people they usually are reliable.

Who responded to our survey?

Of the greenhouse grower respondents, 41% said they also have a nursery operation, 46% sell retail and 15% have a landscape division.

Production Size

Less than 100,000 sq. ft. – 19%

100,000 to 499,999 sq. ft. – 29%

500,000 sq. ft. or more – 25%

Methods used to fill open positions

	Full-time Employees	Part-time Employees	Seasonal Employees
Internet Job Boards	77%	69%	50%
Referrals	73%	71%	64%
Organization Website	54%	52%	44%
Social Media	42%	45%	31%
Former Employee	37%	38%	39%
Job Fairs (in person)	23%	24%	17%
Job Fairs (virtual)	4%	5%	6%
Email	15%	14%	11%
H-2A/H-2B Programs	12%	10%	42%

Customer Base

IGCs – 56%

Big box stores – 26%

Supermarkets/Small hardware stores – 34%

Florists – 21%

Landscapers – 59%

Other wholesalers – 46%

Direct-to-consumer (including online and catalog sales) – 42%

Fundraisers – 22%

Brokers – 18%

Municipalities – 9%

Region

East – 14%

West – 17%

Midwest – 39%

South – 22%

Canada – 8%

Staffing

How many people do you employ during peak season?

Average full and part time is 137 with an average full time of 113

Do you use H-2A or H-2B?

Yes – 39%

No – 61%

For those who answered yes, the average number of workers they get through those programs is more than 90.

Compensation

Hourly Employees (U.S. only, average per hour)

Temp/Seasonal General Labor = \$16.15

Part-Time General Labor = \$16.29

Full-Time General Labor = \$17.09

Staffing

How many people do you employ during peak season?

Average full- and part-time is 137 with an average full-time of 113.

	Add Staff	Reduce Staff	Keep Staff the Same	I Don't Know
Staff Changes Made During 2025	44%	16%	37%	4%
Staff Plans for 2026	21%	2%	70%	7%
Previous Years 2024	35%	12%	53%	0%
2023	36%	15%	48%	1%
2022	24%	10%	58%	9%
2021	40%	2%	46%	11%
2020	39%	2%	51%	9%
2019	32%	4%	56%	8%
2018	29%	5%	60%	6%
2017	32%	6%	55%	8%
2016	30%	6%	58%	7%
2015	29%	7%	59%	5%
2014	27%	6%	59%	9%

Healthcare & Other Benefits

401(k) matching terms

100% - 53%

50% - 13%

Other terms – 44%

Types of medical plans offered

PPO – 58%

HMO – 26%

High-deductible plan – 61%

Health Savings Account (HSA) – 58%

Opt-out of coverage – 16%

Health Reimbursement Account – 11%

Self-insured (fully or partially) – 11%

Healthcare & Other Benefits

Which benefits do you currently offer your employees?

	Full-time	Part-time	Seasonal
Health/Medical Insurance	76%	13%	16%
Dental Insurance	72%	13%	9%
Life Insurance	67%	13%	6%
Sick Leave	72%	49%	38%
Disability Insurance	61%	8%	3%
401(k)	70%	44%	25%
Pension	9%	5%	3%
Annual Bonus	52%	39%	31%
Paid Vacation	94%	39%	22%
Paid Holidays	87%	31%	25%
Employee Discount	76%	85%	84%
Other	13%	13%	0%

Benefits offered in 2015

Health/Medical Insurance	49%	4%	**
Dental Insurance	23%	2%	**
Life Insurance	24%	1%	**
Sick Leave	37%	3%	**
Disability Insurance	21%	2%	**
401(k)	31%	7%	**
Pension	5%	0%	**
Annual Bonus	44%	16%	**
Paid Vacation	70%	13%	**
Paid Holidays	62%	13%	**
Employee Discount	**	**	**
Other	10%	8%	**

Which benefits do your employees consider the most important/valuable?

Health/Medical Insurance	74%	19%	13%
Dental Insurance	16%	3%	0%
Life Insurance	8%	3%	0%
Sick Leave	35%	26%	25%
Disability Insurance	6%	0%	0%
401(k)	41%	26%	38%
Pension	8%	6%	0%
Annual Bonus	31%	45%	63%
Paid Vacation	80%	48%	50%
Paid Holidays	35%	23%	25%
Employee Discount	20%	39%	50%
Other	0%	3%	0%

Which benefits do you use to attract and retain employees?

Above market salaries	34%	24%	32%
Added medical benefits	23%	6%	0%
Added vacation days/PTO	45%	18%	8%
Flexible work schedule	49%	61%	60%
Telecommuting	6%	0%	0%
Incentive compensation	13%	15%	12%
Mentoring program	4%	0%	0%
Profit sharing	19%	3%	8%
Tuition reimbursement	21%	12%	12%
Retention bonus	2%	3%	0%
Signing bonus	9%	0%	0%
Childcare services/reimbursement	2%	0%	0%
Stock options	0%	0%	0%
Fuel allowance	2%	0%	0%
Other	2%	3%	0%
We are doing nothing to attract or retain employees	13%	15%	16%

Compensation

Hourly Employees (U.S. only, average per hour)

Temp/Seasonal General Labor = \$16.15

Part-Time General Labor = \$16.29

Full-Time General Labor = \$17.09

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
All Respondents		
Crew Leader	\$47,045	\$22.62
Department Manager	\$72,029	\$34.63
Field Supervisor	\$54,749	\$26.32
General Labor	\$37,764	\$18.16
General Manager	\$105,953	\$50.94
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	\$48,387	\$23.26
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	\$41,307	\$19.86
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	\$63,046	\$30.31
Head Grower	\$86,544	\$41.61
Merchandise Manager	\$69,116	\$33.23
Merchandise	\$40,849	\$19.64
Owner	\$102,888	\$49.47
Sales Manager	\$99,130	\$47.66
Section Grower	\$51,871	\$24.94
Truck Driver	\$49,482	\$23.79

Midwest

Crew Leader	\$48,048	\$23.10
Department Manager	\$74,129	\$35.64
Field Supervisor	\$51,735	\$24.87
General Labor	\$40,230	\$19.34
General Manager	\$88,301	\$42.45
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	\$38,900	\$18.70
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	\$63,402	\$30.48
Head Grower	\$93,866	\$45.13
Merchandise Manager	\$69,113	\$33.23
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	\$118,721	\$57.08
Sales Manager	\$112,289	\$53.99
Section Grower	\$56,401	\$27.12
Truck Driver	\$53,213	\$25.58

East

Crew Leader	**	**
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Crew Leader		
Department Manager	**	**
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	\$38,608	\$18.56
General Manager	**	**
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	**	**
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	\$73,934	\$35.55
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	**	**
Sales Manager	**	**
Section Grower	**	**
Truck Driver	\$50,195	\$24.13

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
South		
Crew Leader	\$43,777	\$21.05
Department Manager	\$73,481	\$35.33
Field Supervisor	\$60,438	\$29.06
General Labor	\$34,739	\$16.70
General Manager	\$149,603	\$71.92
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	\$43,573	\$20.95
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	\$69,014	\$33.18
Head Grower	\$94,399	\$45.38
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	\$100,256	\$48.20
Sales Manager	**	**
Section Grower	\$50,567	\$24.31
Truck Driver	\$42,690	\$20.52

West		
Crew Leader	\$45,772	\$22.01
Department Manager	\$69,484	\$33.41
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	\$38,714	\$18.61
General Manager	\$93,064	\$44.74
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	**	**
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	\$73,217	\$35.20
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	\$89,073	\$42.82
Sales Manager	\$89,069	\$42.82
Section Grower	\$47,872	\$23.02
Truck Driver	\$55,444	\$26.66

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
Between 100,000 to 500,000 sq. ft.		
Crew Leader	\$46,778	\$22.49
Department Manager	\$67,556	\$32.48
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	\$38,553	\$18.54
General Manager	\$96,524	\$46.41
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	\$39,037	\$18.77
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	\$70,500	\$33.89
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	\$104,450	\$50.22
Sales Manager	**	**
Section Grower	\$45,607	\$21.93
Truck Driver	\$53,982	\$25.95

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
Over 500,000 sq. ft.		
Crew Leader	\$43,689	\$21.00
Department Manager	\$73,690	\$35.43
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	\$38,600	\$18.56
General Manager	\$112,293	\$53.99
Grower 2nd level (3-5 years)	\$53,955	\$25.94
Grower Junior level (0-2 years)	\$42,640	\$20.50
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	\$66,198	\$31.83
Head Grower	\$114,675	\$55.13
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandise	**	**
Owner	**	**
Sales Manager	\$119,900	\$57.64
Section Grower	\$58,152	\$27.96
Truck Driver	\$59,114	\$28.42