

**Workshop/Symposium Title:**

An examination into the strategic linkage between the external labour market conditions and the internal Human Resource Management processes in rural Okanagan businesses.

**Presenters:**

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## **Description of the Session**

An environmental scan of the agriculture industry in the Okanagan has identified a threat to the industry. Farm business managers and food processors believe that there is a serious shortage of seasonal and full time workers. Anecdotal evidence indicates that primary producers are losing a percentage of their crops due to lack of harvest workers, and a shortage of workers is affecting the ability of processors to operate their plants at full capacity. During the fall/winter 2006/07, 72 business owners/managers were interviewed to investigate their human resources management processes.

The purpose of the workshop is to examine the relationship between the external labour market supply and demand conditions, and the internal human resource management practices, with special attention as to how managers recruit and retain their workers. The objective is to identify the gap between the availability of skilled and semi-skilled workers in the region, and the ability of managers to recruit and retain these workers. Describing this gap is the first step in developing a solution to their labour shortage problem.

Questions to be answered during the workshop are:

1. Is this industry, in fact, facing a labour shortage?
2. If so what is the cause of this shortage?
  - Is it a structural problem (no people)?
  - Is it a management problem (lack of HRM skills)?
  - Is it a combination of demographics and management skills?

## **Linkage to Conference Theme**

This workshop addresses the conference theme of “the linkage between research and practice”; specifically as relates to the recognition of and adaptation to environmental changes by the small business sector.

## **Abstract**

Industry leaders, farm business managers, and food processors believe there is a shortage of workers in the Okanagan region. Initial evidence indicates that primary producers are losing a percentage of their crops due to lack of harvest workers, and a shortage of workers is affecting the ability of processors to operate their plants at full capacity. This workshop investigates the strategic linkage between the external labour market supply and demand conditions, and the internal human resource management practices, with attention as to how managers recruit and retain their workers. The objective is to describe the gap between the availability of workers in the region, and the ability of managers to recruit and retain these workers.

## **Session Details**

*Suggested Audience:* this workshop will appeal to small business managers, government policy makers, economic development officers, and educators

*Suggested length:* 20 – 30 minutes (length can be adjusted to fit the time allotted for these types of workshops/symposia)

*Equipment required:* LCD projector