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The top 10 qualities Farm Kids bring to the workplace

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In my experiences growing up on a farm, and in my line of work, I have interacted with a wide variety of people. Since an early age, I have always believed you can identify quickly upon meeting someone whether or not he or she grew up on a farm, have worked on a farm, or possess the ‘farm kid’ mentality. These students and young professionals possess recognizable talents and abilities that allow them to stand out from their peers. Without further ado (and in no particular order) here are the top 10 qualities kids that grew up on a farm bring to the workplace.

1. Work Ethic

‘Farm kids’ are instilled with the value of hard work, and a great work ethic. They are resourceful and willing to stay until the job gets done, and done right. Often, this work ethic translates into a willingness to “get dirty” when necessary, and complete the work even when conditions aren’t ideal. Knowing the value of hard work also means that you can count on farm kids to have the determination to see a task through to completion, often without close supervision necessary.

2. Responsibility

Employers and co-workers often recognize their ‘farm kid’ colleagues are reliable and dependable. Responsibility is extended to ‘farm kids’ at an early age. Growing up, the rule in my home was “you eat after the animals eat”; my sister and I knew that we were accountable for having our chores completed before we sat down to the dinner table. In the workplace, these colleagues can be expected to accept take full ownership for their projects and work to get the job done right.

3. Critical Thinking Skills

Challenges often arise on a farm; addressing these issues develops skill in independent thinking, problem solving, ingenuity, and offering creative, innovative solutions. Through a social media discussion Katie C. shared, “[Farm kids have] the ability to solve problems and come up with creative solutions! I had a Kindergarten teacher tell me she can pick out the farm kids as early as kindergarten based on their ability to problem solve.” I believe this ability expands and deepens over time, serving as a great asset in the workplace.

4. Flexibility

Nature and the markets don’t always trend the way we’d like on the farm. In the workplace, this translates into the ability to be flexible as needed and make do with a given situation. I’m sure, like myself, many ‘farm kids’ can look back and remember mornings when plans were drastically changed due to escaped livestock– resulting in being late to church, work, or school. On the farm and in the workplace, sometimes things must be done that are not on our preferred time frame or schedule.

5. Initiative

Farm work imparts an ability to see what needs to be done, and then seek to accomplish that work. These individuals are driven, and typically have less hesitation in making decisions regarding work. ‘Farm kids’ take action on the work as necessary, without always needing to be given instruction or direction.

6. Perseverance

Persistence, endurance, and perseverance: all qualities that ‘farm kids’ bring to the workplace. They often possess a great internal drive, and can make hard choices when necessary. They know how to deal with disappointment, and have an optimistic outlook regardless of the situation. For many ‘farm kids’ their faith in a bigger plan empowers their perseverance and optimism.

7. Team Player

Very little work on a farm is done completely independently. In the workplace, 'farm kids' know that it takes the whole team to accomplish a project with the most success. While working independently is also a skill of 'farm kids', they bring a willingness to assist co-workers as needed. Often they are eager to do what it takes to support the overall work of the team or organization.

8. "Real World" Skills

Often 'farm kids' come to the workplace armed with practical, real world skills they can directly apply to their jobs. Often, these skills are in the practical areas of science, technology, engineering and math, as well as general agriculture. These skills translate into on the job common sense and ability that benefit themselves and their peers in the workplace.

9. Respect

Respect for others, respect for authority, respect for property are all learned on the farm. This often translates into being a colleague that knows how to extend respect to others, treat others well, and be open and coachable.

10. Humility

Farm work results in being rewarded over time for your labor, there's very little instant gratification. In the workplace, this often translates to less of an "I deserve" attitude, a lack of pretentiousness. Through a social media conversation, Katy K. shared that this attitude develops from the fact that "you don't reap the field of benefits if you didn't plant, [you must] plant and care for it properly along the way."

Please let me make one thing clear. I am not implying that only those that grow up on a farm possess these qualities, and that non-farm individuals do not have these abilities. I believe that growing up on a farm facilitates the opportunities for these skills to develop more naturally than it might for those without the same experiences or opportunities. There are other avenues for these skills to develop with conscious effort.

There is bonus 11th item for the list that I believe overarches all the others: **Passion**. Passion for the field of agriculture often translates into the workplace; it facilitates and motivates the other qualities on the list. We are engaged in this industry because we care, because we love it, and because we live it.

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