



# Forging Ahead: Profitably During a Labor Shortage

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North Slope Management

## North Slope Management :

- 300+ acres of vineyards managed in the Walla Walla AVA
- 8 small-to-medium sized estate vineyards
- Focused on high quality and small-lot productions
- Primarily not mechanized
- Licensed Farm Labor Contractor



## Challenges:

- Direct labor force competition from other vineyards and orchards close by
- Frequently different crops are being hand-harvested creating pay competition (asparagus, onions, cherries, peaches, apples)
- The core group of employees at my operation are aging-out and retiring
- 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants aren't replacing their parents, getting better jobs and higher education
- Less new immigration incoming each year

## Additional challenges:

- Increased labor regulations (do you need to be a FLC? More training and reporting) – not a bad thing
- Increased cost to have labor (minimum wage increasing, required sick pay) – not a bad thing
- Employees are aware of the challenges employers face – not a bad thing
- Changes in attitudes creating no room for poor leadership - definitely not a bad thing.

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Full time benefits offered to these employees. Additionally, start earlier in the year for seasonal employees.

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Management spends more time with the crew

## Results

- Improved employee retention
- Increased interest in working for our company
- Better attitudes because employees feel appreciated and heard
- Big labor savings where we have done partial mechanization
- Overall labor costs have increased from previous years but we haven't had to sacrifice our farming and quality goals
- Reduced stress for all



**“Without labor nothing prospers.” – Sophocles**