

A featured segment designed to share business-critical information to seed-selling professionals. Visit SeedWorld.com to download this department and other tools to help you sell seed to farmers.

The Customer Is Evolving

SELLING SEED IS A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO PROFESSIONALS—A PROFESSIONAL FARMER AND A PROFESSIONAL SEED SALES REPRESENTATIVE. SEED IS THE MOST VITAL INPUT A FARMER BUYS. WITHOUT SEED, THE FARMER HAS NO USE FOR SEED TREATMENTS, INSECTICIDES, HERBICIDES OR FERTILIZERS, SOIL TESTING, APPLICATORS OR FIELD SCOUTS.

Those are just some of the reasons farmers no longer buy seed from their friends or relatives. Instead, they must buy seed from professionals—people who are willing to work closely with them to help them raise the best crop possible. Gone are the days when farmers buy from a neighbor just because they are friends.

New varieties are coming into the market so fast that farmers can't keep up with all the changes. As a result, they can no longer make their own decisions or base those decisions on the previous year's

outcome. Farmers need leadership.

Still, relationships are an essential part of every business transaction, but the kinds of business relationships established today are different, especially when making a purchase such as seed. Farmers don't seek out close friends when they need serious advice on important business issues. They seek advice from professionals. This is why every person selling seed today must be a professional who assumes a leadership role in taking farmers where they don't know they need to go.

THE "SELL SEED FIRST" CHECKLIST

The following is a list of things seed sellers need to do in order to lead farmers and help them get the most out of every variety they plant on their farms. This also means repeat business for you—the seed seller.

1) Advise prospects and customers to tell anyone who stops in to sell them seed to leave

their farm if they don't ask to look at the fields before recommending varieties. Seventy-five percent of all varieties never yield to their potential because they are planted in the wrong field. Tell them you never talk varieties, until you spend time matching your varieties to both their management system and the soils those varieties will be planted in.

2) Advise prospects and customers to tell anyone who stops in to sell them seed to leave their farm if they just offer them incentive programs to get them to buy. Seed sellers must have one goal on a sales call and that is helping farmers raise more bushels. Show the customer how to get maximum yields, regardless of the varieties they plant.

3) Advise prospects and customers to tell anyone who stops in to sell them seed to leave their farm if they try to convince them to make a purchase by only showing them plot data or yield information. All data is based on

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last year's environment, which will never repeat itself. Instead, ask them about their three-year yield goal and how they plan to reach it. Explain that every variety on the market has the genetic potential to produce two to three times the current level, and the key is making specific in-field changes to allow all varieties to produce to their full potential.

4) Advise prospects and customers to tell anyone who stops in to sell them seed to leave their farm if they offer to lower price to get them to buy. Farmers don't want something cheap, they want something good. When the focus is on breaking yield barriers, price doesn't matter and input costs become less important. Tell them that your goal is to lower their total cost per bushel across all acres, not just to sell them cheap seed.

5) Advise prospects and customers to tell anyone who stops in to sell them seed to leave their farm if they want to write a seed order, rather than developing a cropping plan. A cropping plan starts with variety selection, matches the varieties to each field, then matches the crop protection

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package to each field and variety. Be sure to tell them you will be there when they plant your varieties to make sure everything is on the right track, and you'll be riding their combine in the fall as they're harvesting to review the plan for the next year.

SEED TO INCREASE THE BOTTOM LINE

Selling seed to 21st century farmers is a very serious business. There is no room for mistakes when it comes to ensuring maximum profit from every acre. The marketplace is full of top-performing genetics and outstanding technologies. But seed sellers need to stop holding farmers back by trying to save

them money and, instead, start helping them produce more bushels by getting more involved while selling them seed.

On-farm yield increases that come from genetics alone are only about one to three percent per year, but yield advances that come from changing how farmers raise a crop can be as much as 10 to 25 percent in one year alone. Seed sellers must become leaders who are able to take farmers where they do not know they need to go. You have all of the latest information. Use it to make a real difference on every one of your customers' farms.

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