



## ***Aligning Your Ag Business: Sales Alignment***

Challenges are facing the agronomy industry. It is critical to evaluate, rethink and align your business to meet those challenges. Significant business may be lost if appropriate changes are not made.

“How do we structure and position our agronomy business model, sales model and sales positions to align with the needs and expectations of growers who are expanding acres, while continuing to maintain strong relationships with our current customers who are primarily traditional growers?”

Our Expert for the Sales Alignment article interview is Kevin Eye. Kevin’s career in agriculture has spanned over 40 years. He served as Vice President, Northern Sales Business Unit and Vice President, Agronomy & Product Development at Winfield United from 2013 to 2018. Kevin is skilled in understanding the agricultural segments from B2B to the end-user and providing information and insight to the marketplace related to new technologies, products, sales, and alignment practices.

*We have identified Five Key Actions that we believe are necessary to minimize erosion of sales and profits and to position agronomy businesses for growth and profitability in the future. Action One is Grower Segmentation. What is the second action?*

Sales Alignment & Strategies: providing your growers top-notch service and retaining them as loyal customers is the result of successfully executing on your agronomy business plan. A dedicated and focused employee team is critical in carrying out the business plan.

*What are the key components of an agronomy business plan that incorporates “sales alignment & strategies?”*

To obtain an effective plan, it is about developing “sales alignment & strategies” for your business. Some key components should include.

- Plan for the future:
  - Vision (The Why) – Goal Setting (short/long term) – Customer Segments (sales team focus)
- Competitive Advantages:
  - SWOT, Competitor Analysis, Your Company’s Differential Advantages
- Strategic Planning:
  - Strategy (Define how you can succeed in achieving your goals)
  - Tactics (Action plan to deliver the long-term strategy and meet the related goals)
  - What is the plan to reach the goals (Action items and resources required)?

## ***Aligning Your Ag Business: Grower Segmentation***

*How important is it to include customer experience and feedback into the agronomy business planning process? What tools are effective in gathering customer input and feedback?*

Measuring your customer's experience is important in making sure you are listening to them and it helps to build a trusted relationship. To do this, meet with some key customer-growers one-on-one asking them a few questions about the agronomy services and products they are getting from you. GAP analysis (1 to 5 scale) is used to measure the gap between how you are doing currently and the grower expectations. Gaps greater than 1 indicate a desire for improvement. Also, ask the grower what services are not offered today, that are/would be important to them.

Again, as was mentioned in article 2, the progressive grower has the greatest opportunity for growing your business sales and profits. Meet with several progressive grower prospects in your market area about what they are wanting and needing from their agronomy inputs supplier.

*In the previous article 2, customer segmentation was discussed. How important is aligning sales team skills with grower expectations?*

It is vital you have a sales team with the needed skills: sales, technical, product knowledge and building customer relationships. And to match those skills to the 3 grower segments: traditional, progressive, transactional. If some of your sales team does not have some of the skills need, you need to consider realignment or restructuring.

*How will you know if your team has the needed skills?*

To know for sure, have the sales team complete a competency assessment. This data in addition to grower feedback, and in-field sales observations, will provide you with the information you need.

Finally, execute the agronomy business plan. Make sure the sales team has their grower and prospects assigned to them; and monitor progress. And conduct quarterly reviews of the business plan to measure results compared to goals; adjust the strategies and tactics as needed.

*What are the important actions to take?*

1. Develop an agronomy business plan: Plan for the Future; Competitive Advantages; Strategic Planning, producing "sales alignment & strategies" for your agronomy business.
2. Measure the customer experience using GAP analysis and ask progressive growers what they are wanting and needing from their agronomy supplier.
3. Match sales team skills with grower segment's needs and expectations.

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