



## ALIGNING YOUR AG BUSINESS

### ***Aligning Your Ag Business: Sales Model Analysis and Planning***

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 Model Analysis and Planning 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. Let’s review: Action One is Grower Segmentation, Action Two is Sales Alignment & Strategies. What is the third action?*

Sales Model Analysis & Planning: improving alignment will require an agronomy sales position, capable of functioning as a Trusted Advisor – (TA), with a deep understanding of what progressive growers need and want from their agronomist. This understanding will define the agronomy sales position critical competencies, and the associated knowledge, skills, and behaviors.

*What is the importance of a Trusted Advisor growing sales to progressive growers?*

The Trusted Advisor (TA) will be expected to target potential new progressive growers and develop relationships with them as a primary job role.

*What is the importance of the Trusted Advisor’s knowledge and skills?*

Trusted Advisors (TA’s) will need to be skilled at articulating and demonstrating their expertise, Agronomic Knowledge & Technology skills, to gain credibility with progressive growers. They will need to be able to establish trusting relationships and convincingly sell growers on the full value of their Agronomic Knowledge & Technology skills.

*How will the role of Trusted Advisor differ from other agronomy salespeople?*

Trusted Advisors see their role differently from traditional agronomy sales. Many agronomy sellers do not capture credit for the full value they bring to growers. Most of their value is included in the price of the agronomy and seed products.

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*What is the importance of effective discovery in building relationships?*

A relationship built on trust is essential. Early in the relationship the trusted advisor will invest time in understanding the grower's vision, goals, and objectives learned from a needs assessment and asking good discovery questions to learn more about his/her farming operation.

*How do you envision the differences in how progressive growers want to purchase products and services?*

Each progressive grower will want a unique B2B proposal that meets their specific requirements. This will involve more of an ala-carte approach to sales. Value will need to be established for each product and service in the proposal. Agronomy sellers may not be going to the farm and getting an order for the full cropping plan.

*What are the communication expectations of progressive growers?*

Progressive growers expect their trusted advisor to be an agronomic resource, sending out agronomic updates and new trials/ideas with data. They want timely digital communications on crop input planning and in-season crop conditions, (text messaging, web site, emails, etc.).

*What are examples of communication tools to use with progressive growers?*

As an example, texting to a grower (or post on YouTube) a 2-minute video, weekly on current crop conditions (in the field), builds that trusted-advisor status. And valuable information for your growers

*What is the role of a trusted advisor in providing grower recommendations?*

A trusted advisor will be deeply involved in supporting growers in making data driven decisions. They will help growers navigate the technology tools and value of data.

*What other core competencies are expectations of progressive growers and important to the success of a trusted advisor?*

- Leading yearly Business Planning Meetings with individual growers focused on their farm needs and helping create a partnering perspective which can be mutually beneficial to the progressive grower and company.
- They must be able to represent their Company' points of difference to growers in a way that gains credit for value, enabling their ability to get paid for products and services.

*What are the important actions to take?*

1. Improving alignment with progressive growers will require a sales model and agronomy sales position capable of functioning as a Trusted Advisor.
2. Trusted Advisor will invest time in understanding each grower's vision, goals, and objectives learned from a needs' assessment and deep discovery process.
3. Targeting progressive growers and developing relationships with them is a primary job role of the Trusted Advisor agronomy sales position.
4. Trusted advisor to be an agronomic resource, sending out agronomic updates and new trials/ideas with data.

*For more information or to contact intRAtrain, please email [sales@intratrain.com](mailto:sales@intratrain.com) or call 507-665-6266.*



intRAtrain  
229 S. Main St. - Le Sueur, MN 56058  
[www.intratrain.com](http://www.intratrain.com) – 507.665.6266