

 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MINNESOTA: ENVIRONMENT + FOOD & AGRICULTURE + COMMUNITIES + FAMILIES + YOUTH

Building Meaningful Working Relationships

BRET OELKE – UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT



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OBJECTIVES

- Identify which relationships you need to manage
- Explore ways to develop and improve professional relationships
- Develop ideas on how to maintain meaningful working relationships

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RELATIONSHIPS

“If you can be interested in other people, you can own the world”

Jay Abraham

Everyone can take the time to be interested in and make others feel needed, valued and important.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS

- Success is powered by three things: know-how, reputation and a network of contacts (Customers)
- The **formula for success** = **your human capital** (what you know) times your **social capital** (who you know) times your **reputation** (who trusts you).

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS

- Once you establish your “know how” and build a network, then your time needs to be spent on building trusts.
- You build trust by building sincere, meaningful working relationships with your customers.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH WHOM?

- In no particular order
 - Buyers
 - Suppliers
 - Employees
 - Employers
 - Business Partners
 - Family Members
- These are all your customers!

CUSTOMERS

- Internal
 - Employees, employers, supervisors, partners, family members
- External
 - Buyers of your production
 - Consumers?

CUSTOMERS

- External
 - Suppliers of inputs
 - Seed, crop protection, fertilizer, insurance, capital,
 - Suppliers of capital items
 - Machinery, grain handling and storage, capital, land
 - Suppliers of services
 - Farm managers and consultants – including tax, legal and agronomy consultants

CUSTOMERS

- What do they desire?
- What can you provide?
- How do you establish relationships?
- How do you improve relationships?
- How do you maintain relationships?



WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

- Internal Customers – a brief conversation
 - Employees
 - Employers/Supervisors
 - Good boss vs. bad boss
 - Partners
 - Family members



WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

Always keep in mind when dealing with external customers, either buyers or suppliers, how they are paid. Grain buyers are not in business to get you the most for your production. They are in business to maximize their own profitability. Your task is to find out how you can help them achieve their goals while achieving your own.

WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

- External Customers
 - Buyers of your production
 - Understand what they need from you
 - Be responsive to their needs
 - Lower transactions costs
 - Don't waste their time

WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

- External Customers
 - Input Suppliers
 - Understand what they need from you
 - Be responsive to their needs
 - Lower transactions costs
 - Don't waste their time
 - Examples - Fertilizer, capital



WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

- External Customers
 - Suppliers of Capital Inputs
 - Understand what they need from you
 - Be responsive to their needs
 - Lower transactions costs
 - Don't waste their time
 - Examples – Machinery, machinery, land



WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS DESIRE

- External Customers
 - Suppliers of Services
 - Understand what they need from you
 - Be responsive to their needs
 - Lower transactions costs
 - Don't waste their time
 - Examples – Farm Managers, others?



RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Should be “relationship development, improvement and maintenance”
- You first need to develop your business philosophy and how you want to position your business.
 - Example – being responsive to buyers needs
- Mission, vision, values.



RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Decide which suppliers you will do business with
- Do you need to “pick a team”?
- Are you better off doing business with multiple suppliers?



RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

- Maintain Contact
 - Not just when you want or need something
- Communicate in multiple ways
 - Personal – face to face
 - Written notes
 - Email
 - Text
 - Newsletter
 - Other?



RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

- Provide honest feedback
- Admit when you are wrong or have made a mistake and don't be afraid to apologize
- Listen more than you talk. Become adept at non verbal communication (body language)
- Keep detailed notes



RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

- Use the “Golden Rule”
- Be positive – very few people want to spend much time around folks with a negative attitude.
- Sincerely make the other person feel important.



RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

- Be a good listener
- Make sure you understand that people need to know “what’s in it for me”
- Be proactive in developing, maintaining and improving relationships
- Have a plan?



FIXING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

- External
 - Identify why the relationship needs improvement
 - Approach the other party and open lines of communication
 - Work very hard at establishing trust
 - Utilize the previously discussed concepts to improve and maintain



OTHER THOUGHTS

- What questions do you have?

SUMMARY

- Everyone you do business with, both internally and externally should be treated as a valued customer.
- Make the effort to expand your business network and establish or improve the relationships with your customers.
- In order to maintain meaningful working relationships you must **COMMUNICATE!**



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