

OBJECTIONS & ROLE-PLAY

How to Visit Planters in the Spring

SCRIPT



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When you visit planters with customers in the spring, you need to have a well-practiced story. The best way to do that is to role-play planter visits with a partner using different scenarios. Once you practice those scenarios, every planter visit will feel like you've done it many times before. You will find yourself in control of the situation and making the experience for both you and your customer a valuable one.

In the Planting Customers Class, I gave you a word-for-word script on what to say and how to say it. In this Role-Play Class, let's practice your story by using one particular scenario—planter speed and how to get a customer to SLOW DOWN. This is easier said than done.

Let's say you stop to conduct a planter visit with a customer. When you arrive, you find the customer is planting faster than you would like. The first thing many sales reps tend to do when they discover this is to recommend that the customer slow down. They feel that they've found a problem and they need to fix it right away. They believe that getting the farmer to slow down will help him produce a better crop, and it will also show the farmer that the sales rep brought real value to the visit.

However, to a farmer, getting his crop planted is one of the most emotional times of year, so how you approach a grower about this emotional subject is very important. Once you recognize the issue, mentally review the story you practiced using this exact scenario. After all, there are only three primary issues you really need to practice that you could possibly run into on any planter visit—planting conditions, planting depth, and planting speed. And, those just happen to be the most emotional decisions that are made during planting.

Once you have reviewed your story in your head, start with the five-step planting customer report card and follow it as it's laid out. It leads you into that change you want to address with the grower.

Let's begin with our Planting Customers script.

First, we're going to be sure we're dressed up for the visit. Many salespeople, especially those in agriculture, still argue with me about dressing up. This is not a time when you dress down to blue jeans. The minimum standard is colored denims. You're a professional. You're there to move him, to lead him, to attract him. You're very knowledgeable and can help reflect that knowledge by being, at least, a little better dressed than your competition.



The second step is to park your vehicle safely off the road and out of the way. Nothing destroys perceptions faster than having a vehicle parked in the wrong place.

The third step is being prepared for a few different scenarios. You're going to pretend he's coming down the field toward you, he's on his way down the field away from you, he's turning at the end of the field as you pull up, or he's stopped at the end filling his planter. If he's turning at the end of the field when you arrive, or if he is stopped at the end when you arrive, do not stop. You want to have time to gather information on field conditions, planting depth, and so on, before you make contact with him. You want him either halfway down the field going away from you or halfway down the field coming toward you when you stop. If he is stopped at the end when you arrive, wave and drive by, then turn around and come back when he's in the right position.

Let's imagine you go to a farmer's field and see him halfway down the field coming toward you. You get out of your pickup, which you've parked in the right place, and walk into the field. You crouch down and begin digging to find that the seed is already planted so you can gauge soil conditions, planting depth, spacing, and so on. As you're kneeling, you look up, see him coming close to you, wave, give him a big smile, and point toward the ground. He's going to be very curious about what you see. He stops, gets out of his tractor cab, and walks over to see what you've found.

Script

You: Hey John, nice to see you. I told you I'd be by at planting time to do my ten-minute check.

John: Oh yeah, nice to see you, too. What are you seeing?

You: I see a nice seed bed, John. You've done a great job so far. Let's go over and start at the planter and work our way back here. *[As you walk toward the planter, you say]* Wow, nice planter, how long have you had it?

John: I got it last year. I really like it.

You: The first thing I want to do today is give you this form, John, and check our seed. I want to make sure the seed is meeting your expectations. Can I open your planter box and take a look?

John: Sure.

You: Does the seed look okay to you, John?



John: Yeah, it looks fine to me.

You: Is it planting okay? What does the monitor say?

John: The monitor says it's planting just fine.

You: Why don't you go ahead and rate our seed quality from 1-10 on the card—10 being the highest. What would you give us?

John: I'll give you a 10. That's really good-looking seed.

You: That's great. *[As you put the lid back on the seed box and close it, you start asking him questions]* What's your yield goal for this field, John?

John: I think it's 210.

You: *[As you walk from the rear of the planter and out into the field to check the depth and spacing, you say]* Remind me of the kinds of changes you committed to making this year to achieve top yields? *[You kneel down on your knee to start digging again and he's standing over you with the checklist watching you]*

John: Well, I'm planting deeper like you told me to.

You: Yes, it looks like you are right at 2 inches. Great job. But it looks like you're driving a little fast. What's your speed?

John: Well, I'm at 6 mph.

You: Wow. You know what we recommend, don't you?

John: Yes, between 4-4 ½. But everything is really working nicely at this speed.

You: In this field, you may be able to get by with that, John, but your other fields are not this level and even, are they?

John: No, they're not.

You: John, I want you to rate yourself a 5 on speed and I'm going to make a note on this field that you were driving that fast. But, I also want you to promise me you will slow down to 4 ½ in your other fields. We want every plant to come up within 12 hours of each other. Planting too fast can cost you 30-40 bushels per acre.



John: Yeah, ok I will.

You: I want you to do one more favor for me, John.

John: What's that?

You: I want to ride with you for just two rounds at a speed of 4½ mph. I want to compare the two different planting speeds when we do your post-planting report card check.

John: Sure, that's no problem, we can do that.

You: Just a couple more things, John. I'm going to help you start next year's cropping plan earlier this year, and I'll tell you why. Every year, I see three things on nearly every farm that make the difference between good yields and great yields. First, farmers who plant two inches deep, as you are, have a huge yield advantage every year. Second, farmers who plant slower have more even emergence and higher bushels per thousand plants, thus more yields. Lastly, and most importantly, farmers who complete their cropping plans prior to harvest have the ability to raise their overall yield averages permanently. I'll be walking your fields every two to three weeks from now on, but I will be here in mid-July to begin your cropping plan for next year. We can't delay this year, John. We have to get started earlier.

John: Okay, I'll look for you.

You: John, I appreciate your time.

John: Well, thanks for stopping.

You: Have a great day. If you need anything at any time, here's my card. Give me a call. I sure appreciate your business. Oh, here—you keep this jackknife that I brought to check seed depth with—it's yours. You can monitor your placement in the rest of the fields.

John: Gee, thanks. I appreciate it.

You: Have a great day, John.



What kinds of signals are you planning to send to farmers during your planting customer visits?



First, you want to signal that you are a leader. If you're not leading, you're following and you're not in control.

Second, you need to be different. Most people selling seed do not visit planters. It makes you different. It sets you apart and puts you in control of the whole process. He finds this an exciting time because planting season is a very emotional time for him. You want to add to that emotion in a positive way to make it an even more exciting time for him.

Third, you want to send the signal to the customer that you have a plan—a sequential process that helps him raise a better crop. You want to send a signal that you're smart, you know what you're doing, you're organized, and you're there to help him. There are so many strong signals that come out of this Planting Customers strategy that are important to both you and to him.

You need to be there when he plants his crop. That's the bottom line. Keep him focused on positive and productive states of mind. The strategy will work perfectly for those who prepare, practice, and follow the system, but for those who don't, they will suffer the consequences at harvest.

In this Study Guide, I've included a list of FAQs for following planters. Be sure to review it. If you have additional questions about visiting planters, be sure to send them to Jocelyn at jocelyn@rcthomas.com for our next Live Office Hours and we'll help you out any way possible.



FAQs

1. Which growers should I visit first?

Visit your NEWEST customers first and work your way to your best customers last. New customers don't know your rules when it comes to managing your products, so you need to be there. It's exactly the opposite of riding harvesters.

2. How do I get the grower to stop and visit?

The best way is to go into the field a few yards, kneel down, and start digging for seeds. As he approaches, signal that you've found something and he'll stop because he'll be curious.

3. How many planters can I visit in a day?

Visiting planters is an average of a 10-minute stop. Therefore, depending on logistics, you should be able to visit at least 8-10 planters in a single day.

4. What if I can't get there when he starts planting?

It's always ideal to be there at the start, but the most important thing is to get there. The key is good scheduling of YOUR time.

5. How can I help him with seed placement if I'm not a planter expert?

All you need to know is how to measure depth. The planter operator will know how to make the necessary adjustments.

6. How can I get him to make corrections without offending him?

The best way is to always talk in third person. That is, tell him what you see in other fields with other customers (without mentioning names). Tell him about the positive things that happen when adjustments are made.

7. How do I know what to say when I get there?

Just follow the script. If you stick to it, it'll take you exactly where you want to go.

8. What happens when he is doing everything right already?

Situations and conditions change every year. In ideal conditions, a grower may make the proper adjustments, but it's when conditions are less than perfect—which is almost always the case—he needs your help, or at least reminding.

9. Do I use a StoryBook on the call?

No.

10. How long is too long to stay?

Unless you have a special reason, never stay longer than 15-20 minutes.



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