



(2) Follow the Planter



Introduction

Planting Customers is a strategy designed to help prepare sales reps for the most important sales call of the year—visiting customers’ planters during planting season. Planting Customers is a strategy. It’s not just an activity that brings lasting benefits to farmers. It’s also a strategy that brings changed customers to salespeople—the people who sold them the seed.



When you visit your customers’ planters in the spring, you will see permanent, positive changes take place. First, they will take more responsibility for growing their crop and, as a result, most likely won’t have product performance issues with your varieties during the growing season, or be disappointed at harvest. Second, they will almost always order more from you for the next year. Third, they will be conscious of the things they need to do each and every year to raise the best crop possible. And finally, they will be out of the Ag Cycle, doing things on your time schedule instead of their own. You can achieve all those things just by being at your customers’ planters in the spring. But before we begin practicing the Planting Customers script, let’s preview the actual call.

Before you make your first planter visit, practice sample scenarios.

Pretend the farmer is coming down the field toward you, or he’s on his way down the field away from you, or he’s turning on the end as you pull up, or he’s stopped at the end of the field filling his planter. Those are various scenarios you can set up to practice your role-play. You need to be organized, be professional and, most of all, not waste his time.

Pretend you see that your customer is halfway down the field coming toward you as you arrive in your vehicle. You get out of your vehicle (that’s parked out of the way) and begin walking into the part of the field that is already planted. You kneel down and begin surveying soil conditions, planting depth, singulation, and so on. As your customer approaches in the planter, you look up, point to the ground and give him a big smile. He will be curious about what you’re seeing. As he turns at the end of the field and stops, you walk over to the tractor as he gets out of the cab. Greet him with a big smile.



Planting Customers Script

You: Hey John. I told you I would be by at planting time to do my 10-minute check.

Grower: Oh yeah, nice to see you. Thanks for stopping.

You: John, I won't take a lot of your time. I just have five things I want to check today. I have this short checklist we'll follow. I'll have you hold it and check things off as we go.

Grower: Okay, sure.

(As I'm walking over to his planter to start the process, I'm going to give him a compliment.)

You: Wow, nice seed bed. You've done a great job so far. (Or wow, what a nice planter, how long have you had it? Or nice tractor, is that new or do you wax it?)

(Everyone enjoys a compliment. Make them real and sincere.)

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

Grower: Sure.

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

Grower: Yeah, it looks fine to me.

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

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

You: That's great. *(As I put the lid back on the seed box and close the lid, I start asking him questions.)* What is your yield goal for this field?

Grower: I think it's 210.



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(As I walk from the rear of the planter and out into the field to check the plant spacing and depth, I ask him another question.)

You: What kinds of changes did you commit to making this year to achieve top yields?

(I kneel down on my knee to start digging. He's standing over me with my checklist, watching me.)

Grower: Well, I'm slowing down like you told me to and putting on starter fertilizer.

You: How fast are you driving?

Grower: Well, between four and five and a half.

You: Wow, that's great. Everything really works nicely at that speed, doesn't it?

Grower: Yeah, it really does, but it sure seems slow.

(I get up. We take a look at the checklist and I respond.)

You: John, why don't you go ahead and rate our seed quality from 1 to 10 on the card. What would you give us, 10 being the highest?

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

You: How would you rate your planting depth?

Grower: Well, I think it's pretty good. What would you say?

You: You're near perfect. I'd give you a nine on plant spacing, too. And I'd give you a nine on speed, John. You're doing a really nice job there.

Grower: Thanks.

(Grower circles all those answers on the card.)

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You: Is this variety "A" we planned to plant here in this field?

Grower: Yes, it is.

You: Great—put "yes" down for question No.4. John, we need to begin your cropping plan earlier this year and I'll tell you why. Every year I see two things on nearly every farm that make the difference between good yields and great yields. First, farmers who follow the Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop have the highest yields every year. Second, 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 it this year, John. We have to get started earlier.

Grower: Okay, I'll look for you.

You: John, I appreciate your time.

Grower: Well, thanks for stopping.

You: If you need anything, at any time, here's my card. Give me a call. I sure appreciate working with you. Have a great day, John.





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Planting is the beginning of every seed sales relationship. When a customer has enough faith to plant your seed, he's trusting he's doing the right thing for his farm and his future, and that trust comes from his belief in you, the seed seller. One of the reasons planter visits build such strong relationships with farmers is because no one else does them. He knows you are unique and doing something special for him no one else does. Just don't forget the number one reason you are at the planter—to set the date to start next season's cropping plan prior to harvest.

So, what do you say to a farmer who doesn't want to set the date and start his cropping plan prior to harvest? All you need to say is:

You: That's no problem, you can do it anytime you want.

(You need to relax him and let him know you're not trying to talk him into anything. The customer must want to do it.)

You: All the farmers I work with who have the highest yields every year all have one thing in common. They all have their cropping plans done before harvest every year. We just begin the planning process and we can always change it later, if we need to.

(Secondly, you can always ask for help. Start by asking if he will do you a favor and help you. He'll say, "Sure, what is it?")

You: I am getting so busy with my job that I don't have enough time to spend with my family. I'm asking some of my best customers, like you, to start their cropping plans earlier this year to help me have some more time with my family. Would you help me out and do that for me? We can always change it.



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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