SEED SELLER BLUEPRINT

LIVE STREAM

(2)

Follow the Planter

RC THOMAS COMPANY

(2)

Follow the Planter

PLANTING SEASON

(2) Follow the Planter

Do You Know?

- How to find time to visit planters?
- How to get a customer to stop planting when he is in a hurry?
- What to do if your seed is not being planted when you stop by?
- How to get the customer to make changes?
- What to do if the planter operator won't follow your recommendations?
- What to do if the owner is not operating the planter?
- Which planters to visit first?
- You don't need to be a planter expert to do this?

The Planting Customer Experience

Planting Customers is a term I coined many years ago to describe the act of being at a customer's planter for 10-15 minutes in the spring when he's planting your seed. It's the number two customer contact of the entire sales year because of all the positive changes that take place when the visit is done correctly.

The real value of a Planter Visit is not based on just getting the seed planted properly. That's an important factor, but the most rewarding part of the Planter Visit comes when the sales rep sets the date to start the grower's cropping plan prior to harvest. This takes the grower out of the Ag Cycle and puts the seller back in control of his time and his business. The number one purpose of visiting customers' planters in the spring is to get the customer out of the Ag Cycle and on the sales rep's schedule. When that happens, all the other benefits come with it.

Visiting a customer at his planter is an important enough strategy for you to spend as much time preparing for the visit as possible. Sales reps need to *Preplan*, *Prepare*, and *Practice* prior to executing this strategy.

There is also one more very important reason why preparation for the Planter Visit is so important. When the Planter Visit is done right, the customer will think about what you did and what you talked about during those brief 10 minutes for the rest of the time he's planting his crop. He'll go from field to field thinking about what he needs to do to maximize yields in each of those fields. And whether or not he follows all your recommendations exactly, he will be conscious of what he's doing or not doing. No other customer contact that brief brings along with it that kind of long-lasting power. **That's why Visiting Planters is a vital part of the buyer's experience.**

Follow the Planter—Defined

A strategy when sales reps visit customers' at planting time to ensure their products are being planted properly, while getting their customers out of the Ag Cycle.

The Planting Season is…

- The beginning of the new selling season.
- The No.2 customer contact of the year.
- The time that determines how successful the rest of your sales year will be.
- The time of year when 100% of the grower's yield is determined.
- The time of year when the grower's time is worth the least.

Protocols for Planting Customers

Every sales rep can make Planter Visits a valued experience for themselves and their customers by following six key steps.

1. Get Customers Out of the Ag Cycle
2. Speak the 21st Century Production Language
3. Understand the Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop
4. Understand the Process of Following Planters
5. Prepare a Planting Customers Story
6. Role-Play Practice the Planting Customers Story

1 Get Farmers Out of the Ag Cycle

Define the Ag Cycle:_____

What % of your buyers and customers are caught in the Ag Cycle? _____

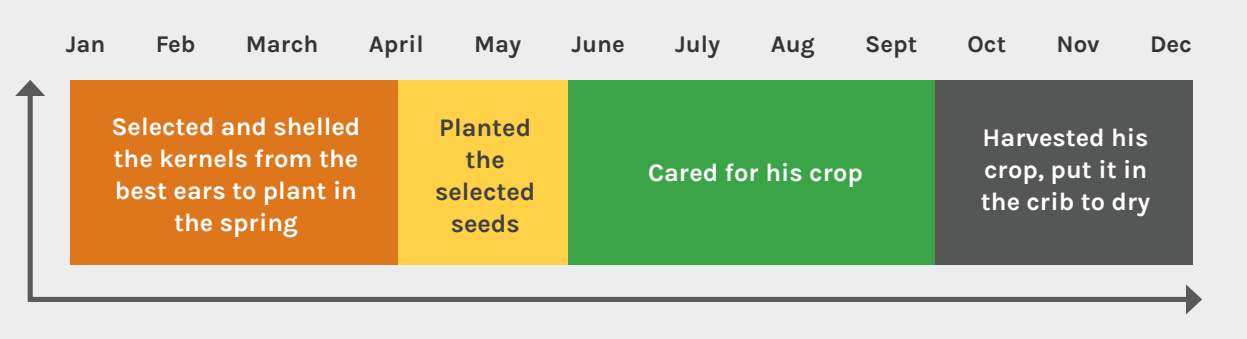
What % of your dealers are caught in the Ag Cycle? _____

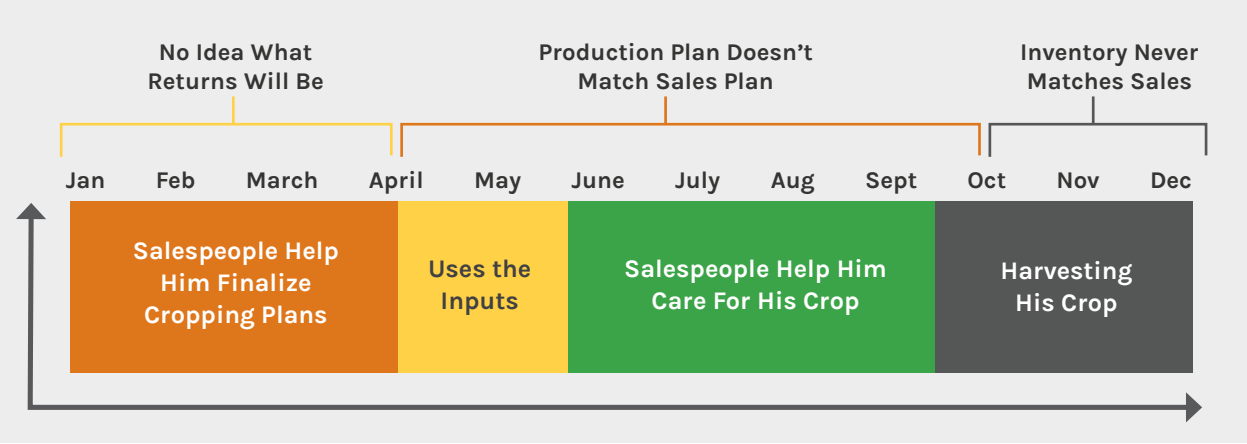
What % of your own sales reps are caught in the Ag Cycle? _____

Why are those percentages so high? _____

_____

The No. 1 Reason for Being at Customers' Planters





What are the five best ways to get farmers out of the Ag Cycle?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2 Speak the 21st Century Production Language

Bushels Per Thousand Plants Concept

The only thing that really matters in any field planted to any crop is how many plants in that field are producing to their full potential. Plant population and row spacing have little to do with top yields, if every plant in that population is not producing to its maximum potential. When 95% or more of the plants are producing to their full potential, it's time to consider raising population, but not until then.

Farmers continue to struggle with getting significantly higher yields every year because they're going about it the wrong way. They're still being told to increase plant population or narrow row spacing as a way to increase yields. That strategy seldom works because, instead of focusing on the quality of every plant in the stand, they're simply placing more plants in the field, increasing competition among the plants. The average farmer has only about 70% of the plants in any of his fields producing to their full potential.

In order to raise yield on farms, we use a concept called *Bushels Per Thousand Plants*. That is, how many bushels, or pounds, or tons of the crop are being produced from every one thousand plants. I use this concept primarily on corn, soybeans, canola, and cotton. It can be used in any crop, but in the case of canola, for example, you need to use a slightly different formula. Once that number is determined, you can compare it to the ideal for that particular crop and investigate to find out why that stand of plants may or may not be at that ideal point. Here is the formula and how to use it to calculate Bushels Per Thousand Plants.

YIELD	=	Bushels / 1,000	x	Plant Population / 1
180	=	(X) / 1,000	x	30,000 / 1
180	=	30,000 (X) / 1,000		
180	=	30 (X)		

6 = x bushels per 1,000 plants

In the formula, solve for the unknown, call it "x."

Corn example:
The farmer says he raised 180 bushels of corn per acre at a living plant population of 30,000. That means he produced 6 bushels of corn from every 1,000 plants. Since there are 30 sets of 1,000 plants in the field (30,000), simply divide the plant population into the yield to get bushels per 1,000 plants. The tipping point where the population is nearly maxed out on corn is approximately 8 bushels per 1,000 plants. At that point, population can be increased.

Row spacing and plant population can have no real impact on yield until every plant is producing to its full potential. Fertilizer, insecticides, and fungicides cannot have their full intended impact when many of the plants they're applied to are what I call "runt pigs." They will never produce to their potential regardless of how much you feed them.

Soybean example:
The farmer says he raised 50 bushels of soybeans per acre at a living plant population of 150,000. That means he produced 0.33 bushels of soybeans from every 1,000 plants. Since there are 150 sets of 1,000 plants in the field (150,000), simply divide the plant population into the yield to get bushels per 1,000 plants. The tipping point where the population is maxed out on soybeans is approximately 0.6 bushels per 1,000 plants. At that point, population can be increased.

Canola example:
The farmer says he raised 40 bushels of canola per acre at a living plant population of 6 seeds per square foot. That means he produced 0.15 bushels of canola from every 1,000 plants. Since there are 6 seeds per square foot, we need to find out the number of seeds per acre. In this case, it is 216,360 so we simply divide the plant population into the yield to get bushels per 1,000 plants. The tipping point where the population is maxed out on canola is approximately 0.18 bushels per 1,000 plants. At that point, population can be increased.

Bushels Per Thousand Plants Formula: (For Canola)	$\textbf{Yield} = \frac{(x)}{1{,}000} \times \frac{\text{Pop} \times 43{,}560}{1}$

Notice that in the case of a small-seeded crop such as canola, the population is determined by multiplying the number of square feet in an acre by the number of seeds per square foot.

Every plant that doesn't produce to its full potential is referred to as a "runt pig." Once it gets off to a slow start, it remains behind all of the other bigger, more robust plants. No matter how much you feed a runt pig, it will never produce to its full potential.

Note: The only way to decrease the number of runt pigs, and maximize the number of bushels, pound, or tons per 1,000 plants the grower needs, is to closely follow the first two steps of the Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop. Plant in the best soil conditions possible and strive for perfect seed placement.

The Impact of Increasing Bu/1,000 Plants

Most farmers focus on getting a good stand, rather than making sure every plant comes up within 12 hours of each other. When all plants emerge in that time frame, they have the best chance of producing to their full potential. Watch what happens when a grower focuses on increasing bushels per 1,000 instead of just getting a good stand.

Let's Practice

Bushels Per Thousand Plants Formula:	$\textbf{Yield} = \frac{\text{Bushels}}{1{,}000} \times \frac{\text{Plant Population}}{1}$

CORN	SOYBEANS	CANOLA
36,000 ppa = 180 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants	150,000 ppa = 50 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants	10 seeds/sqft = 40 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants
_____ ppa = 180 bu/a 6 bu/1,000 plants	150,000 ppa = _____ bu/a .4 bu/1,000 plants	8 seeds/sqft = _____ bu/a .12 bu/1,000 plants
36,000 ppa = _____ bu/a 7 bu/1,000 plants	150,000 ppa = 90 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants	8 seeds/sqft = 70 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants
36,000 ppa = 144 bu/a _____ bu/1,000 plants	150,000 ppa = _____ bu/a .7 bu/1,000 plants	9 seeds/sqft = _____ bu/a .18 bu/1,000 plants

A farmer asks you, "What is your opinion on narrow rows?"
What is your answer?

A farmer asks you, "Will it pay for me to increase my plant population from 7 to 10 seeds per square foot on my canola, or from 34,000 to 38,000 on my corn, or from 170,000 to 195,000 on my soybeans?"
What is your answer?

A farmer asks you, "What population do you recommend I plant my corn, soybeans, or canola?"
What is your answer?

A corn grower is planting 36,000 ppa and has a yield goal of 180 bushels per acre. Should he increase his plant population in order to achieve higher yields? If yes, how much? If no, why not?
What is your answer?

A soybean grower is planting 150,000 ppa and is harvesting 60 bushels per acre. How many bushels per 1,000 plants is he harvesting?
What is your answer?

How many bushels per 1,000 plants will the above grower need in order to achieve 75 bushels per acre?
What is your answer?

What will his yield be when he hits 0.70 bushels per 1,000 plants?
What is your answer?

Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop

3 Understand the Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop

How do you make sure your products perform to your and your customer's expectations on every farm every year? The answer—you get your customers to help you!

The only job your customers have is to ***Protect Product Performance*** at all costs, and *your* job is to keep your customers focused on that single task. The secret is minimizing the damage from the more than 1,000 variables that affect the performance of your varieties every year. The combination of environment and management styles creates more than 1,000 variables that can distort performance, if the crop is not properly protected. I've taken this secret and boiled it down into five steps.

The following Top 5 Factors are designed to minimize the damage from the more than 1,000 variables that affect the performance of the living and breathing varieties farmers plant every year. When the Top 5 Factors are followed, they help protect your varieties all season long.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Let's look briefly at each one.

#1. Soil Conditions at Planting Time

It doesn't matter how good your genetics are or how great your seed quality is if your seed is planted in lousy conditions. The reason this is number one is because farmers violate it every year. They believe the planting season is only 7-10 days long, so they hurry to get the crop in, regardless of whether or not conditions are right. Farmers have been told for years that the earlier they plant the crop, the higher the yield will be. **Planting season means: Get It RIGHT, Not RUSHED!** Am I a fan of early planting? **Yes.** Are there advantages to planting early? **Some.** Is early planting the secret to getting top yields every year? **No! Absolutely not.**

Most farmers like to plant as early as they can. They've come to believe the earlier they get the seed in the ground, the higher their yields will be. Most growers also believe they risk huge yield penalties if they plant after the early window. But most growers are in too much of a rush to get their seed in the ground in order to "Git-R-Done" rather than getting it done *properly, which costs them lots of yield.* They become so focused on planting early that they forget they have over an entire month of good planting time available—not just a few days. Most everyone in the industry is giving farmers the wrong information. Do the following exercise and see for yourself.

How many days are in your planting season?

On the left end of the line below, write the earliest date you would allow someone to plant corn in your area.	**On the right** side of the line below, write the latest date you would allow someone to plant corn in your area	**On the middle** of that line, write the total number of days between those two dates.

The Planting Season is NOT Two Weeks Long!
What kinds of things can you DO to lengthen the Planting Season in the minds of your growers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The goal is to ***Protect Product Performance*** at all costs!

#2. Seed Placement

Can you have good seed placement without good soil conditions? No.

If a farmer doesn't have the number one factor in place, he won't have number two either—good seed placement. Seed placement is all about seeding depth and proper seed-to-soil contact. Despite the fact that implement sellers tell farmers they can drive 10 mph to plant, unless you have a *perfect* field, you will not be successful. In addition to good singulation, the goal is to have every plant emerge within 12 hours of each other. Any plant that emerges later, will be 1-2 leaves behind and will not produce to its potential.

The key is accuracy—NOT speed.

Every grower should instruct his planting team on accuracy, not speed. It seems everyone involved in production agriculture—from input suppliers to the grower—does everything they can to get the planting season over with as quickly as possible. Instead of slowing it down so farmers can do it right, they all rush around and get farmers wound up even tighter than they normally would be. Farmers also contribute to their own sense of panic by increasing the size of their planters and then driving them that much faster.

If growers want the most perfect stands and the highest yields, the recommended planting speed is 4.0 mph. But try getting a farmer to slow down below 6.0 mph when he just got a new planter that seems to work just as well at high speeds as it does at slow speeds.

You need to deliver the **Do It Right and Not Rushed** message to all your customers and their planter operators as often as possible. So, when you get behind your customers' planters this season, be sure to remind them the planting window is approximately 45 days long (in most parts of the country), and not two weeks. Tell them to visualize the planting season as being three times as long as they think it is. That attitude alone will help farmers take more time when planting so they can do as many things as close to perfect as possible, despite what their neighbors are doing. After all, your customer is the one who will be harvesting and getting paid for his crop this fall, not his neighbors!

It's NOT about speed, but that's not what we model...

Agricultural suppliers use 100-foot applicators and spreaders that operate at highway speeds.

Seed sellers deliver seed in bulk packages and truck load lots to help growers get planting completed as soon as possible.

It's NOT about speed—it's about ACCURACY.

To get the grower to choose accuracy over speed you need to:

1. Keep him focused on his yield goal and excite him about the kind of crop he can raise by following protocol.
2. Increase his confidence level by complimenting him when he follows protocol.
3. Lead him by being well-prepared and practiced.
4. Bring him new information.
5. Leave him excited about the future.
6. Ask him to make a few rounds at slower speeds, then place a flag to mark those spots for comparison at a later time.

No. of 10 Hour Days to Plant 1,000 Acres with a 12 Row Planter

Mph	x	Ft/Mile	x	R-Width	÷	Sqft/Acre	x	No. Row	x	No. Acres	÷	Acres/Hr	10hr Days
4.0		5,280		20”		43,560		12		1,000		9.7	10.3
4.5				20”				12		1,000		10.9	9.2
5.0				20”				12		1,000		12.2	8.2
5.5				20”				12		1,000		13.4	7.5
6.0				20”				12		1,000		14.6	6.8
4.0				30”				12		1,000		14.6	6.8
4.5				30”				12		1,000		16.4	6.1
5.0				30”				12		1,000		18.2	5.5
5.5				30”				12		1,000		20.0	5.0
6.0				30”				12		1,000		21.9	4.6

No. of 10 Hour Days to Plant 1,000 Acres with a 24 Row Planter

Mph	x	Ft/Mile	x	R-Width	÷	Sqft/Acre	x	No. Row	x	No. Acres	÷	Acres/Hr	10hr Days
4.0		5,280		20”		43,560		24		1,000		19.4	5.2
4.5				20”				24		1,000		21.9	4.5
5.0				20”				24		1,000		24.3	4.1
5.5				20”				24		1,000		26.7	3.7
6.0				20”				24		1,000		29.1	3.4
4.0				30”				24		1,000		29.1	3.4
4.5				30”				24		1,000		32.7	3.0
5.0				30”				24		1,000		36.4	2.7
5.5				30”				24		1,000		40	2.5
6.0				30”				24		1,000		43.6	2.3

No. of 10 Hour Days to Plant 2,000 Acres — All Row Widths

Mph	x	Ft/Mile	x	R-Width	÷	Sqft/Acre	x	No. Row	x	No. Acres	÷	Acres/Hr	10hr Days
4.5		5,280		20”		43,560		48		2,000		43.7	4.6
4.5				20”				36		2,000		32.8	6.1
4.5				20”				24		2,000		21.9	9.1
4.5				20”				16		2,000		14.6	13.7
4.5				20”				12		2,000		10.9	18.3
4.5				30”				48		2,000		65.5	3.1
4.5				30”				36		2,000		49.1	4.1
4.5				30”				24		2,000		32.7	6.1
4.5				30”				16		2,000		21.8	9.2
4.5				30”				12		2,000		16.4	12.2

#3. Seed Quality

Seed quality is far more important than genetics. But what good is top seed quality if you don't have good soil conditions and it's not placed in the soil properly? Virtually every company in the seed industry offers the best quality seed possible to customers. What growers need to do is make sure that seed is stored and handled properly prior to and during planting. Too often seed is placed in warehouses and awaits months for planting in varying temperatures and conditions. That environment can have a huge negative impact on what was once high quality seed.

In addition, as important as seed quality is to a grower, companies supplying seed have not done a good job of telling their customers how to manage quality once they receive it in the seed they buy. And if they don't tell them how to manage it, instead of having a positive effect on profit, it can actually take profit away. For example, one of the reasons seed quality has lost its impact as a product value is because seed companies have allowed growers to think that the newest and latest seeds they buy are damage-proof. They've come to believe they can plant it in almost any soil conditions and it will still produce to its potential.

Instead of receiving a list of specific instructions for how to properly manage the living and breathing baby seed they receive in every bag, box, bulk bag, or truck load, they get nothing to tell them how to protect the quality they receive.

It doesn't matter what brand or variety of seed a farmer buys if the quality is not maintained all the way until planting. Seed quality trumps all other factors affecting varietal performance—including genetics.

Your grower needs to know it doesn't just start with the seed; it actually starts with the quality of the seed.

#4. Right Variety in the Right Field

Seventy-five percent of all varieties never yield to their potential because they're planted in the wrong field. Yet, few seed sellers take the time necessary to (or even know how to) place the right products in their growers' fields. They just sell farmers varieties, drop them off, and let the farmer put them wherever they want. And it costs the farmer and the sales rep plenty.

This is one of the reasons we begin developing cropping plans with growers six to nine months ahead of planting—to give the seller and the grower more time to make those kinds of key decisions. Getting growers to write cropping plans prior to harvest is one of the foundational principles I teach, and it fundamentally changes how you sell. It's essential to take the time to match the right varieties with the right fields, and only a knowledgeable sales rep can help a grower with that all-important job.

#5. Post-Planting Management

What happens after the crop is planted? This is a critical time every year, because crops are in all kinds of stages throughout the country.

What are you doing on a daily basis to monitor your customers' crops and nurture them toward maximum yields in the fall? The fifth factor involves the farmer continuing to protect every variety's performance at all costs. He must not skip steps in extra applications of fertilizer, fungicides, or insecticides throughout the season. Sellers must make sure they don't turn the irrigators off too soon to save a little money. As market prices fluctuate, farmers tend to pull back from taking care of a crop, and instead, begin to *punish* it by not giving it what it really needs, when it really needs it. **Remember, the goal of these five factors is to minimize the damage from more than 1,000 variables.**

How Do You Get Growers to Follow the Top 5 Factors?

Believe in the Top 5 Factors.

- Understand each of the factors and how they contribute to maximum yields
- Introduce them to prospects and customers early
- Demonstrate how they are part of the cropping plan to raise yields to new levels
- Use leadership language like "Let's..." or "I need to have you..."
- Reinforce the positive changes the grower made after the Planter Visit based on the Top 5 Factors
- Focus on getting the grower to follow the first four factors initially—they require no monetary investment
- Be sure to be at the planter when he begins planting your seed to enforce the Top 5 Factors Strategy and record the results
- Be sure to note on the Planter Visit Card any adjustments that were made or not made that would have enhanced achievement of yield goals

4 Understand the Process of Following Planters

The Planter Visit is All About Efficiency. It's the most EFFICIENT way to:

- Teach new buyers how you do business.
- Get growers out of the Ag Cycle and begin crop planning prior to harvest.
- Get growers to begin using a cropping plan instead of just writing an order—insist on portfolios.
- Get the grower to speak and apply the new production language.
- Begin monitoring the grower's progress in how much he's changing how he thinks when he plants his crop.
- Ensure the grower understands the real dollar value Planter Visits can bring.
- Ensure the achievement of the grower's yield goals.
- Show them higher yields come from using a system, not by operating à la carte.
- Show them they must not skip any steps.
- Show them their only job is to Protect Product Performance at all costs.

Progress Report Ratings and Checklist

Rate 1-10, 10 Being the Highest

CUSTOMER	Follow the Planter		Planting Report Card		Prospect-ing		Sales Story		Develop Crop Plan		Harvester Ride		Confirming the Order		Field Visit to Protect Sale		Seed Delivery	
John Smith	1	✓	2	✓	2	✓	3	✓	3	✓	5	✓	6	✓	7	✓	7	✓
Bob Jackson	1	✓	4	✓	4	✓	5	✓	5	✓							2	✓
Ken Thomas	1		1		1		3	✓	2	✓	2	✓	0					

The 4 biggest obstacles that keep me from meeting my Planting Customers Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

One of the Greatest Outer Circle Strategies Available to Sellers:
Stay Outside the Circle from the First Moment

"Good morning, nice to see you, nice planter, how long have you had it?"

"Good afternoon, nice to see you, how is our seed planting?"

"Good morning, wow, nice seed bed, how is it planting?"

Not *"How's it going?"*

5 Prepare a Planting Customers Story

Practice Staying Outside the Circle and in Control

1. What do you think the markets are going to do?
2. What population should I be planting my crop?
3. What's your opinion on these new high-speed planters?
4. This is the first time I've planted your seed. Is it going to yield with what I'm planting now?
5. It's getting late, I need to get my crop in the ground.
6. My highest yielding crop last year was my earliest planting.

01 Growers don't know emergence ratings to make sure both varieties emerge within 12 hours of each other.

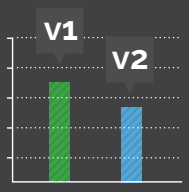
02 Growers can't avoid the negative effects of post-planting nutrient and pest control management strategies on varieties in different stages.

03 Growers don't know when the varieties need nutrients.

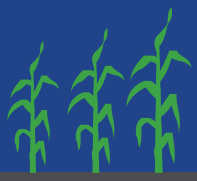
04 Growers don't know flowering dates and silk dates, which are necessary to make sure there is uniform pollen available for the variety in the field at all times.

05 Growers don't know days to black layer of each variety to estimate uniform, optimum harvest time.

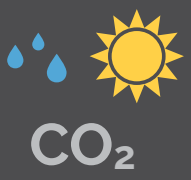
06 Growers don't know the rate of dry down, stalk ratings, standability ratings, and overall expectations of plant health for each variety.



07 Growers don't know exact plant heights to make sure any height or rate of growth differences don't overshadow one variety.



08 95% of what goes into a corn plant comes out of the air in the form of CO_2, H_2O, and sunlight. Any interruption here can have devastating effects on a variety.



09 Growers don't know how they would fix a problem with one of the varieties, should it occur.

10 Growers don't know how they would stop a disease or insect infestation that starts in one variety and moves to another.

11 Growers don't understand that any difference in maturity prolongs the length of time that damaging insects remain in a field.

12 Growers won't learn about differences in genetic abilities because, rather than narrowing down the variables, they increase them geometrically.

6 Role-Play Practice the Planting Customers Story

Unlike riding a harvester, your Planter Visit is only a 10-minute stop. That's why you need a well-practiced story. Efficiency in achieving your goals is important.

You need to have a planned, well-practiced story that puts you in control, leads the grower where he doesn't know he needs to go, and gets him to make changes he doesn't know he needs to make.

A great Planter Visit story includes:

- Dressing better than the farmer
- Being 10 minutes early
- Stopping ONLY when he is 3/4 of the way down the field so you have time to survey conditions and find the seed
- Having a practiced story
- Having a clipboard containing the cropping plan and your Planting Customers Visit Card (see below)
- Having a seed finder, trowel, or other digging tool to look for the seed
- Having a magnetic level
- Having a tape measure—100 foot is the best
- Having a copy of the "Planter Speed Kills" brochure
- Having a copy of the Top 5 Factors
- Bringing a pencil or pen

Grower's Name _____ Crop Last Year _____ Planting Date _____

Field Name _____ Yield Goal _____ Population _____

Planter Make/Model _____ No. Rows _____

Rate Yourself and Your Plan to Maximize Yield

1.	Our seed quality and appearance?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2.	Soil conditions conducive to top yields?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3.	Seed placement/depth/planter speed?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Variety placement/right variety/right field? ○ Yes ○ No Variety _____
5. Upcoming date for Next Year's Plan? _____
6. Post Planting Management ○ Fertility _____ ○ Fungicide _____
   ○ Insecticide _____ ○ Field Visits Planned _____

Comments/Concerns:

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

Crop Planner *Grower*

Script

(Walk into the field and begin checking areas that have been planted. As you see him coming toward you to the end, wave and point to the ground, give him a big smile. He will be very curious as to what you are seeing. When he stops, he will come over to satisfy his curiosity.)

Crop Planner: Hi John, Rod, Rod Osthus, Director of Crop Planning for _____! I told you I would be by at planting to do my 10-minute check.

Grower: Yeah, nice to see you. Thanks for stopping.

Crop Planner: I have 5 things to check today. I'll have you hold the rating card and help me check things as we go.

Grower: Okay, sure.

Crop Planner: Let's start with looking at our seed to be sure it's planting okay. Is it ok if I look in your seed boxes?

Grower: Sure.

(As you walk toward the planter, give him a compliment)

Crop Planner:

Ex: Wow, what a nice seed bed. You've done a great job so far.

Ex: Wow, what a nice planter. How long have you had it?

Ex: Nice tractor. Is that new or do you wax it?

(As you open a seed box to look at the seed, tell him what you're doing.)

I'm making sure the seed quality is meeting your expectations. Does it look okay to you?

Grower: Yeah, it looks real good.

Crop Planner: Is it planting okay?

Grower: Yes, it seems to be planting just fine!

Crop Planner: Excellent... give us a rating 1-10, 10 is the highest!

Grower: I will give you a 9, nobody's perfect.

Crop Planner: Great, I like the way you think.

(As you walk to the planter row to check depth, spacings, etc. ask him...)

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

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

Crop Planner: How fast are you driving?

Grower: Between 4 and 4 ½.

Crop Planner: Great. Everything really works nice at that speed, doesn't it?

Grower: Yes, but it seems slow.

Crop Planner: What's your yield goal for this field, do you remember?

Grower: I think it's 210.

Crop Planner: Well, if you keep this up, the sky's the limit. The soil conditions are really nice… give yourself a 9. Excellent seed bed.

Grower: Okay, thanks.

Crop Planner: Seed placement and depth looks great, your speed is good… give yourself a 9.

Grower: Okay.

Crop Planner: According to the crop plan, this is variety A, right?

Grower: Yeah, that's right.

Crop Planner: Indicate YES on the form. This is the variety we planned to put in this field. You're doing an excellent job.

Grower: Thanks.

Crop Planner: I'll take the form back and finish it. There are just two more things I would like to say before I leave.

Grower: Okay.

Crop Planner: First, every year the growers who do everything they can to protect product performance throughout the entire season, such as proper planting, making sure the plant is never short of nitrogen, protecting it with fungicides, and so on, almost always have a 20% yield advantage at harvest time over everyone else. Second, all of our top producers plan early. They have their cropping plans done prior to harvest. I'm going to make July 14th the date we start your cropping plan for next season.

We can't delay it this year. We have a lot to do to reach that three-year yield goal we set. I'm going to write this date on your card and have you sign it to approve all of those ratings you gave yourself. By the way, I will be reminding you of that cropping plan date almost every time I see you throughout the season.

Grower: Okay, that sounds good. I'll look for you then.

Crop Planner: Thanks for everything, John. Have a great day. If you need anything at anytime, here's my card, give me a call. I appreciate your business very much. Our goal is to raise the best crop you've ever had.

Grower: Gee thanks, I appreciate it.

Crop Planner: Have a great spring. If you need anything, be sure to call.

Grower: Okay, thanks.

Planting Customers Tracking Form

No.	Date	AM/ PM	Operator Name	Mk/Model	Crop	Variety	Yield Goal
Visitor:							
1							
Notes:							
2							
Notes:							
3							
Notes:							
4							
Notes:							
5							
Notes:							
6							
Notes:							
7							
Notes:							
8							
Notes:							
9							
Notes:							
10							
Notes:							

Summary

The Planter Visit is the No.2 customer contact of the year because it signals the start of the new selling season.

The quality of this short customer contact determines the kind of year you will have with that grower. When you visit a customer's planter in the spring, and follow the necessary protocols, two important things will happen for you.

First, that customer will be the least likely of all your buyers and customers to have a complaint of any kind about his crop.

Second, almost every one of those customers increases the size of their order the next year.

It's amazing how many field sellers never make the time to get behind their customers' planters in the spring. But those sales reps who do follow their customers planters will tell you they will continue to do it every year because the benefits far outweigh any challenges they may face making time to do it.

Also, a Planter Visit is not complete until you set the date, or attempt to set the date, with the grower to do his cropping plan prior to harvest. So many reps follow the first four steps on the Planter Visit Card, but then skip step five—the most important step. Don't be one of those reps.

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.

DECISION TIME – FOLLOW THE PLANTER

Strategy 1

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

Strategy 2

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

Strategy 3

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

Strategy 4

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

Strategy 5

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

Strategy 6

What I'm going to do:

When I'm going to do it:

How I'm going to do it:

The 9-Step Blueprint

To the Complete Buyer Experience