SEED SELLER BLUEPRINT

LIVE STREAM

(3)

Planting Report Card

THE 9-STEP BLUEPRINT

RC THOMAS COMPANY

The 9-Step Blueprint

To the Complete Buyer Experience

PLANTING SEASON

(1)
Seed Delivery

(2)
Follow the Planter

(3)
Planting Report Card

SELLING SEASON

(4)
Prospecting

(5)
Sales Story

(6)
Develop Crop Plan

CONFIRMING SEASON

(7)
Harvester Ride

(8)
Confirming the Order

(9)
Field Visit to Protect Sale

What Was the No. 1 Purpose of the Planter Visit?

(1)
Seed Delivery

(2)
Follow the Planter

(3)
Planting Report Card

The no.1 purpose was to get the grower out of the Ag Cycle by setting the date to start his next year's cropping plan prior to harvest.

The Planter Visit is the 2nd in a Series of New Experiences for Your Customer

(1)
Seed Delivery

(2)
Follow the Planter

(3)
Planting Report Card

It is those new experiences that create long-lasting relationships with customers and keeps them buying.

Season 1: Planting Season

(1)
Seed Delivery

(2)
Follow the Planter

(3)
Planting Report Card

The Planter Report Card Visit is the 3rd in a series of new experiences for your customers.

PLANTING SEASON

(3) Planting Report Card

Do You Know?

- How to introduce this concept to your customers?
- If every grower knows what you intend to do when you conduct this visit?
- How to prioritize the steps you want to take with each customer on this call?
- What the next steps with a grower are once you determine his bushels per 1,000 plants?
- What to do if the grower won't follow your lead?
- Your goal when making this contact?

Planting Report Card Visit

I hope by this time of the season you've had the opportunity to visit as many of your customers' planters as possible. Planter Visits are the number two customer contact of the entire year because it's your best opportunity to get customers out of the Ag Cycle and onto YOUR selling schedule. How many of the customers' planters that you've visited, did you set a date to begin their cropping plans prior to harvest? The greater that number, the easier selling is going to be for you during the entire selling season.

If for some reason you didn't set the date at the planter, you have another opportunity during this contact. The Planting Report Card Visit is your SECOND BEST CHANCE to set that all-important date.

The Planting Report Card visit generally takes place 20-30 days after planting, when all the plants in a given field have fully emerged. Ideally, I like to begin these calls when corn, as an example, is in the V3 to V4 stage. You can do it at almost any stage with any crop once the plants are at least 4-5 inches tall, but when you do it early, the grower still has time to replant, should you find serious problems with the stand that need to be fixed. Regardless of the crop you're scouting, you'll be able to see how many of those plants came up within 12 hours of each other.

Planting Report Card Visit

Another strategy that sets you apart from everyone else

What is the real outcome of this visit when done right?

- Demonstrates you truly care for the grower and his crop
- Brings the grower closer to the crop and reinforces his responsibility in raising it
- Allows you to measure the thinking of the grower and his level of buy-in
- Educates you on the behavior of varieties

The key to getting top yields is not dependent on plant population or row spacing but, instead on even emergence across the field. The goal is to have every plant the exact same size and height once they have emerged from the soil.

It's during this customer contact that you teach the customer how to take bushel per 1,000 plant readings, pounds per 1,000 plants, or tons per 1,000 plant readings in his field to see how close he is to achieving his yield goal for that field. You're there to see what his plant stand is capable of producing. You're in his field at the most infant stage of plant growth, already charting the progress and yield potential of his crop.

The key to growing your sales is setting yourself apart from the competition, and that means being different. By conducting this key step in the Seed*Seller* Blueprint—the Planter Report Card Visit—you accomplish that goal and provide yourself with a huge advantage over your competition.

Every Sales Rep Can Have a Successful Planting Report Card Visit By Following Five Key Steps

1. Tell the grower far in advance the purpose of this call and what you intend to do during the visit.

2. Review the plan with the grower, along with his yield goal, for that field when you arrive.

3. Show how you will calculate bu/1,000 plants with the grower, then have him do the calculations and log the results.

4. Takes notes on the field, and tell him you will put them in the plan when you start it this summer.

5. Set or remind him of the date you will start his cropping plan prior to harvest.

Calculating In-field Bushels Per Thousand Readings

Let's begin by assuming my customer has a corn field planted in 30 inch rows. The first thing I'm going to do is to take a stand count to see how many living plants he has in the field. So, I measure off 17 feet 4 inches, which is 1,000th of an acre in 30 inch rows and then I simply count the number of plants in that 17 feet 4 inches. I can do this in as many places in the field as I want in order to get an average.

Let's imagine that in the 17 feet 4 inches I counted 33 plants. That means this farmer's living population is approximately 33,000 plants per acre.

Next, I go back through those 33 plants and count only the tallest plants in the group. I find that 23 plants of the 33 are taller and healthier than all the rest. This is the group that is going to produce to their full potential and give the customer a full ear of corn. Then I count the next biggest plants in that group and I find there are 5 of those. This is the group that will give the farmer about ¾ of an ear of corn.

Next, I find there are 3 plants that are a bit smaller than the last group, which will likely produce ½ ear of corn and, lastly, there are 2 plants just emerging from the soil that will likely produce ¼ of an ear of corn. Now I'm going to add all of those together to find out how many bushels per 1,000 plants we actually have in this field. Refer to the table below.

The number of plants per acre that will give us full ears is equivalent to 28,750. Multiply that number by 8 bushels per 1,000 plants—which is the ideal for corn—and you get 230 bushels per acre. That is the maximum yield that this field can produce out of the potential of 264 bushels per acre if all 33,000 plants produced a full ear (8 bushels per 1,000 plants). To find the current bushels per 1,000 plants, simply divide 230 bushels by 33,000 and your get 6.9 bushels per 1,000 plants. This grower is leaving about 34 bushels of corn in the field.

The first thing I do is multiply each of the numbers together.

Because those numbers represent 1,000th of an acre, I'm going to multiply my answer by 1,000 so I actually have the equivalent of 28,750 full ears per acre coming from the field out of the 33,000 total ears that will be produced.

23x	1 ear	=	23.00	x 8	=	184 bushel
5 x	¾ ear	=	3.75	x 8	=	30 bushel
3 x	½ ear	=	1.50	x 8	=	12 bushel
2 x	¼ ear	=	.50	x 8	=	4 bushel
			28.75			**230 bushel**

Bushels Per Thousand Plant Concept

The only thing that matters is how many plants in a population are producing to their full potential.

Corn target is 8 bu/1,000 plants—Yield should be 240 bu/a in the example on the right.

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."

Let's Practice

Bushels Per Thousand Plants Formula: **Yield** = Bushels / **1,000** x 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

Notice the Difference?

50 bu/a @ 150,000 plants = .33 bu/1,000
90 bu/a @ 150,000 plants = .60 bu/1,000
Difference: .27 bu/1,000

Top yields begin with pod count followed by seeds per pod.
It doesn't take a lot to make significant increases in yield.

Example: Living pop. 120,000
3,000 seed/lb—2.5 ave. seeds/pod—**40 pods/plant**
120,000 plants x 40 pods/plant = 4,800,000 pods/a
4,800,000 pods x 2.5 seeds/pod = 12,000,000 seeds/a
12,000,000 seeds ÷ 3,000 seeds/lb = 4,000 lbs of seed/a
4,000 lbs of seed ÷ 60 lbs/bu = **66.66 bu/acre = .55 bu/1,000 plants**

Example: Living pop. 120,000
3,000 seed/lb.—2.5 ave. seeds/pod—50 pods/plant
120,000 plants x 50 pods/plant = 6,000,000 pods
6,000,000 pods x 2.5 seeds/pod = 15,000,000 seeds
15,000,000 seeds ÷ 3,000 seeds/lb = 5,000 lbs of seed
5,000 lbs of seed ÷ 60 lbs/bu = **83.33 bu/acre = .69 bu/1,000 plants**

- Increase the number of soybean pods per plant by one, equals an increase of 2 bushels per acre. (Dr. Fred Below, University of Illinois)
- Add 3 kernels to each ear of corn in a population of 30,000 ppa and increase yield by one bushel per acre.

A grower is planting 36,000 ppa and has a yield goal of 180 bushels per acre. Should he increase his plant population 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 a grower need to produce 75 bushels per acre at 150,000 ppa?
What is your answer?

Follow Each Step for a Successful Planting Report Card Visit

Follow each of these steps to prepare yourself and your customer for the Planting Report Card Visit. The Planting Report Card Visit is an essential step toward customers meeting their yield goals.

Prior to arriving at the field, tell the customer what you plan to do.

1. Ask him to give you his opinion on the plant stand
2. Ask him to list the qualities you will be looking for in the ideal plant stand
3. Explain to him the process and formula and how you use it to configure the ideal plant stand
4. Ask him what he sees when he looks at the field

Planting Report Card

CORN
No. of Tallest plants _____ x 1.0 ear = _____ x 8 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre
No. of 2nd tallest plants _____ x 3/4 ear = _____ x 8 bu/1000 =_____ bu/acre
No. of 3rd tallest plants _____ x 1/2 ear = _____ x 8 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre
No. of Smallest plants _____ x 1/4 ear = _____ x 8 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre

Total actual bu/acre:

Potential yield/acre if every plant produced 8 bu/1000:

SOYBEANS
No. of Tallest plants _____ x 1.0 = _____ x .6 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre
No. of 2nd tallest plants _____ x 3/4 = _____ x .6 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre
No. of 3rd tallest plants _____ x 1/2 = _____ x .6 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre
No. of Smallest plants _____ x 1/4 = _____ x .6 bu/1000 = _____ bu/acre

Total actual bu/acre:

Potential yield/acre if every plant produced .6 bu/1000:

COTTON
No. of Tallest plants _____ x 1.0 = _____ x 65 lb/1000 = _____ lbs/acre
No. of 2nd tallest plants _____ x 3/4 = _____ x 65 lb/1000 = _____ lbs/acre
No. of 3rd tallest plants _____ x 1/2 = _____ x 65 lb/1000 = _____ lbs/acre
No. of Smallest plants _____ x 1/4 = _____ x 65 lb/1000 = _____ lbs/acre

Total actual bu/acre:

Potential yield/acre if every plant produced 65 lbs/1000:

Role-Play Practice

Sample script for one of your growers:

You: Good morning Jim, it's nice to see you. Thanks for taking the time to meet me in the field today. I'll wear my mask even though I've been vaccinated. You can do what you like.

Jim: Ok great. I'll wear mine too, even though I feel pretty safe.

You: How is the family?

Jim: Everyone is good. We have been very fortunate.

You: We have, too. No one in our family has been sick either. And our company has also been very lucky. A few people have had it, but no one has been seriously ill.

Jim: That's great.

You: Right now, I'm seeing all my customers and doing my post-planting checks.

Jim: Ok.

You: I'm also setting dates later this summer to start their cropping plans for next year.

Jim: That's awfully early, isn't it?

You: Not at all, especially with the markets we have. Right now, 100% of the customers I've been with the last few days have set the date for when they want to get started. Our goal with the markets where they are, is to help them make 2 years profit in their operation in a single year. They get really excited when they realize the number one factor to achieving that goal is early planning. They tell me they are really excited about the opportunity to pay down debt, expand the operation, or prepare for retirement in a few years. You're thinking the same way, aren't you, Jim?

Jim: Well, I wasn't until you came by (chuckle, chuckle). I suppose I should get at it, too. Can I change the plan if I need to?

You: Sure. We will be finalizing it on the combine, but I've found over the years that once a good plan is in place, there are few changes unless you get more land or something. So, let's take a look at your fields and see where we are now that the crop is up and growing nicely.

Jim: Sounds good.

You: I brought all three of the Planter Visit Cards we did when I was at your planter in the different

fields this spring. What have you learned so far this year by me being at your planter?

Jim: Well, the first thing I learned is that nobody else does this. That alone is unique and so valuable. I really like having another pair of eyes and another opinion during what you call the most important time of year.

You: That's great.

Jim: I learned that I was driving too fast and just trying to get the crop planted as fast as possible, instead of focusing on doing the very best job so I could get maximum yields. It may sound funny, but I overlooked that concept. It has changed the way I look at how I achieve top yields. The Top 5 Factors were new to me and I have to say that I was hesitant in slowing down and following some of them, but they make so much sense. Actually, I learned so much, but those are a couple of highlights.

You: Awesome. Well, you do such a great job, I feel it's a real privilege to work with you.

Jim: And vice versa.

You: Super. The first thing I want you to do today is stand back and look at the field as if it was a picture. When you do that, what do you see? Tell me what you see when you look at this field. Be critical and be complimentary.

Jim: The first thing I seed is how uniform it is. I mean, it really came up evenly this year.

You: Why do you think that is?

Jim: Well, I would say most of it is because I slowed down and did a better job of evenly placing the seed.

You: What was our goal for getting plants to come out of the ground? Do you remember, Jim?

Jim: I think it was to have them all come up within 12 hours of each other is that right?

You: You are right on. It looks like you did a good job with that. What else do you see when you look at this field from the outside?

Jim: Well, because the field is so uniform, it is also the same dark green color throughout the field. I see less variability in color than I have ever seen. That really makes me feel good.

You: You just picked out two of the most important aspects to getting top yields—uniformly sized plants, which means uniformly sized ears and uniform color, which means uniform plant health. Let's see what this field is going to yield this fall.

Jim: This is going to be interesting.

You: Here is a Planting Report Card for you to help conduct this analysis. I will have you pick a row of corn and I will pick a row. We are going to measure off 17 feet 4 inches in these 30-inch rows and count the number of plants in that length to get population.

Jim: Ok. I got 33 plants total. What did you get?

You: I got 33, too. Now go back through those same plants and count only the ones that are the tallest. Start by picking out the tallest plant then compare everything else to it. This is just a visual—don't spend too much time trying to split hairs. Next, count the second tallest, then the third tallest, then the smallest plants. If you have any doubles or skips, let me know.

Jim: I got 26 tallest, 3 next tallest, 3 next tallest, and 1 short one.

You: I got 25 tallest, 4 next tallest, 4 next tallest and no shorts. Now, follow the card and calculate how many bushels per acre you have in this field right now.

Jim: 208, 18, 12, 2 = 240 bu/a

You: 200, 24, 16, 0 = 240 bu/a. We both came out exactly the same. You are on track right now for at least 240 bushels per acre. What is your normal average yield?

Jim: Around 200.

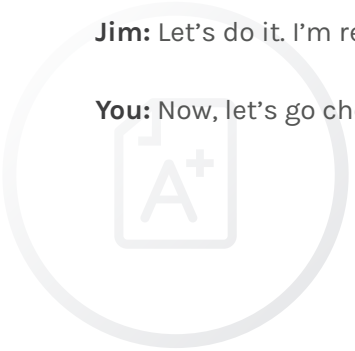
You: If this field was where we want it, it would be at 264 bushels per acre. It is really good, but we can still improve. You're at a little over 7 bushels per 1,000 and our goal is 8 bushels per 1,000. To make sure we keep that 240 potential, our next step is to follow the fifth factor of the Top 5 Factors, which is what, Jim? Do you remember?

Jim: No, I don't.

You: It's post-planting management. We have two more jobs to do right now. One is to support the yield you have in place with fertility and disease management. We have the fungicide plans in place along with the post N applications. We just need to stay on track. Great job, Jim. Next, let's set the date to start planning for next year.

Jim: Let's do it. I'm ready. I'm pumped.

You: Now, let's go check your other fields.



Summary

The key to growing your sales is looking, acting, and talking differently than your competition. By conducting the Planter Report Card Visit, you are clearly different. Few sales reps are in the field with customers after planting, giving them this kind of attention, information, or help in making sure they have the best chance to grow the best crop possible. The goal is to reinforce what you did at the planter, and show the customer how important it is to follow the Top 5 Factors to Producing a Top Crop, as well as the impact those factors will have on his plant stand. You're there to see what his plant stand is capable of producing. You're in his field at the earliest stages of plant growth, already charting the progress and yield potential of his crop, helping to ensure your customer's success.

But don't forget—if you didn't set the date to begin his cropping plan prior to harvest, do it at the end of this customer contact. Even if he said no at the planter, bring it up again and tell him how important it is to begin planning early. Tell him that early planning is the element that all top producers have in common. He can always modify it at harvest, if he chooses.

DECISION TIME

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: _____

_____

DECISION TIME

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: _____

_____