

SEED  SELLER
BLUEPRINT
LIVE

THE 9-STEP BLUEPRINT

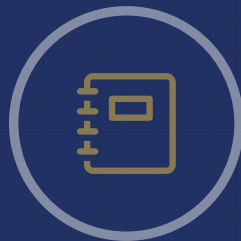


Season 2: Selling Season



(4)

Prospecting



(5)

Sales Story



(6)

Develop Crop Plan



(6)

Develop Crop Plan

Unfortunately, most ag sellers are still writing orders. But if they knew how much that strategy is working against them, they would stop writing orders immediately, and start developing cropping plans for every customer. When you finally stop writing orders with customers and develop cropping plans instead, many positive things will happen to you. Your average order size per customer will skyrocket because you're selling to entire fields, not just writing small orders. Your chances of winning on every farm will skyrocket because the grower will be fully engaged in protecting the crop through harvest. And your customer retention rate will skyrocket because you will win on virtually every farm.

Once you use cropping plans as the foundation for goal achievement, you will reap all the rewards mentioned above—and more.

Every Sales Rep Can Make Cropping Plans the Foundation for Goal Achievement by Following 5 Key Strategies!

- 1 Understand the Difference Between Cropping Plans and Orders
- 2 Teach Farmers About Cropping Plans
- 3 Write a Cropping Plan Prior to Harvest for Each Field Based on the Yield Goal for That Field
- 4 Assign One Variety to Be Planted in Each Field
- 5 Make the Cropping Plan the Focus of All Conversations with Customers

1 Understand the Difference Between Cropping Plans and Orders

Farmers need to change how they view cropping plans. They are the most important part of their business plan. Once they understand how a cropping plan is different from an order, they will see the great benefits it brings and stop worrying about ordering early. Instead, they will only think about planning earlier so they don't lose yield potential from delayed decision making.

Take a look at a few of the differences between orders written with customers and developing field-by-field cropping plans with them.



Why Crop Plans Are the Greatest Asset Growers Can Have!

1. True cropping plans are NEW to most growers!

2. They take and keep you and the grower Outside the Circle!

3. They give you and the grower a roadmap to follow all year!

4. Creates a System's approach that, when followed gets big results!

5. Gets the grower to take total responsibility for raising the crop!

6. Focuses on each individual field and the yield goal for each field!

7. Changes how customers THINK about how to raise a top crop.

8. Removes the emotion when working to raise a crop!

2 Teach Farmers About Cropping Plans

The three most important questions farmers need to answer every year, before they plant next year's crop, are the same three questions most farmers can't answer:

- Where do you want to take your yields over the next 2-3 years?
- What's your plan to get there?
- What's keeping you from getting there?

When you ask growers the first question, they often respond, "I don't know, it depends on the weather." And even when they do give you a specific number, they never have a plan on how they would achieve that yield. I tell them, "We have a plan. It's called a high yield cropping plan. Have you ever done a high yield cropping plan before?" Ninety-five percent of farmers haven't done one since no one has helped them develop that kind of plan. This is how we get the grower's attention.

When farmers understand what a cropping plan is and the power it has on getting them on track to yield levels they have never experienced before, they buy in. I haven't met a farmer yet that didn't want to raise a better crop.

Help growers answer those three very important questions and you will have a customer for life.

3 Write a Cropping Plan Prior to Harvest for Each Field Based on the Yield Goal for That Field

The first step in developing a cropping plan is setting a yield goal for each field. And that yield goal is not based on bushels per acre, but instead on bushels per 1000 plants. Farmers are not paid on how a particular variety does in his field or on his farm. He is paid on the sum of the yields in all fields. That's why it is so important for growers to create a specific plan for each field. Every field is different, therefore, every field needs to have a separate yield goal. The cropping plan lays out the plan for each field and what the farmer will do to maximize the yield in each field. And that goal is based on the number of bushels per 1000 plants the farmer wants to achieve that year. Creating a cropping plan for each field is the most effective way to ensure, not only maximum yield in every field, but also maximum bushels produced on the entire farm.



4 Assign One Variety to Be Planted in Each Field

Every farmer's goal is to maximize profit. However, too many growers aren't doing the things that will allow them to achieve that goal. Instead, they are focused on their yield monitors, seeing which varieties performed the best last year. They forget about ensuring the most basic strategies are followed when growing a crop like, making sure soil conditions are as near perfect as possible at planting, perfect seed placement and ensuring the right variety is planted in the right field. But a very important part of this success strategy includes planting only one variety per field.

For example, if a farmer plants two varieties in a field, one of those varieties will win and one will lose. If the goal is to maximize yield in each field, the best strategy to do is to plant one variety in a field and focus on doing everything possible to maximize yield of that variety. Treating an entire field with fungicide, for example, can be done with greater benefit and efficiency with one variety in the field compared to when two or more varieties are planted in the same field. When more than one variety is planted in a field, each variety is in a different stage of growth and varies in amount of benefit it gets from the application of fungicide.

Plant only one variety in each field and manage that variety for maximum yield. It always pays big dividends over planting more than one variety per field.

5 Make the Cropping Plan the Focus of All Conversations

I stopped writing orders and started writing cropping plans early in my selling career. Once I figured out that chasing prospects and customers all season long until they finally decided to order was not going to work long-term, I looked for an alternative. When I found it, I also discovered many benefits I never realized existed. Cropping plans changed everything I did with my growers and that's because it totally changed how they thought about raising a crop.

The following are steps I took to make sure the cropping plan became part of almost every conversation I had with my dealers and customers.

1. **I kicked off the idea at formal group meetings.** I find it more effective to introduce a new topic in front of the group of customers, rather than one-on-one. There are a lot more questions, which help you solidify the strategy once you launch it in earnest. In addition, when you go to see those customers, they already know about it and are more likely to buy-in.

2. **I completed their first cropping plan for them** without even telling them about it, and attached their order to it. Then I asked them to go to the field with me to help me place the varieties. That's where we talked about setting goals and using the cropping plan as our guide to achieve those goals.
3. **I carried their next year's cropping plan with me every where I went.** I made sure I had a question to ask him about it as I kept fine-tuning the plan for next spring. Soon, the grower would start asking about the plan.
4. **By the time the planter rolled, the grower had all but memorized the crop plan.** But even then, he had a copy of it in his tractor cab to follow as he matched varieties to their respective fields.
5. **We used last year's cropping plan to review what went right and what didn't go as planned.** We also used it as a starting point for next year's plan.
6. **When the customer uses the phrase "completing my cropping plan," and never talks about getting his written order, you have accomplished your mission.**



Write 3 More Examples of What You Will Say to Get a Customer to Start His Cropping Plan Earlier.

1. Where do you want to take your yields next year? **I'm not sure.**
Do you have a plan? **Not really, I guess.** I have one. **You do?** Yes, I do, but there is only one catch, you need to start it now. **Ok.**

2. Jason, I need your help, I'm in a bind. **Ok.** My family is growing so fast, we're so busy with baseball, swimming etc. It would help me so much if we could do your crop plan now instead of after harvest. **Sure.**

3. Bill, I've been working on a plan that to help you make more money next year. **Really?** Yes, but there is only one catch, to make it work, we need to start it now because it is time dependent. **Ok.**

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Role-Play Practice

"I'm not ready to start my cropping plan until harvest is over."

One of the most powerful, order-stopping objections field sellers get, especially this time of year is, "I'm not ready to start my cropping plan until harvest is over." That's a pretty bold statement because not only did the farmer say he wasn't ready, he also told you WHEN he may be ready—*sometime* after harvest. And if it's currently planting season and he won't set the date to start his cropping plan prior to harvest, you're going to have to wait seven or eight months before you can even talk to him about writing his order. That's seven or eight months that your company will have to operate without a sale. That's why this objection is not only one of the most common, it is one of the most dangerous when it comes to selling seed. When a grower delays his buying that much, it puts your company at the mercy of that grower. He controls your time, your inventory and, eventually, your profit.



Anytime a prospect or customer says he's not ready to begin his cropping plan, you will hear things like:

- I don't know what I'm going to do yet.
- I'm going to wait and see what the market does before I place my order.
- I'm going to wait to see what input costs are before I decide which crops to plant.

I'm going to give you several different responses, in no particular order, to this all-important objection of wanting to delay cropping plan development. But first ask yourself—is what the grower wants to do good for him? Is it the right thing for both him and you? The answer is NO. Once you've decided that, you can proceed with your responses. The key is to never allow the selling process to stall or stop your ability to write orders. Farmers have plenty of excuses for not wanting to start their cropping plans before harvest and order their inputs early, but they have no real REASONS for delaying this decision.

The Farmer's Objection: I'm not ready to start my cropping plan that early. I have no idea what I'm going to do until after harvest.

Response #1

You: Hey, that's no problem, we don't have to finalize anything until harvest, but the key to getting those yields up to meet the goals we set for each of your fields is to do it early.

The No.1 factor that sets the stage for getting top yields is early planning. We can always change the plan. The day we start the planning process, we jump into my truck, take a good look at all your fields, and talk about where you want to take your yields for each of those fields next year. You will really like the process, so let's not delay.



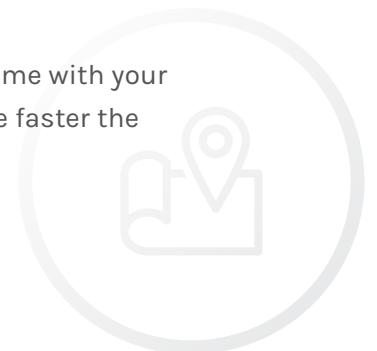
Response #2

You: That's no problem. You can order anytime you want.

That immediately releases the grower from thinking you're there just to try to get his order. If he pushes back on the idea of developing his cropping plan earlier in the season, it can only mean one thing—his perceptions of you are not yet high enough to get him to follow your lead. That happens to be the only valid reason growers have for not ordering early, and that's because you haven't raised perceptions of yourself high enough and developed a relationship strong enough to get the grower to follow your lead and do what you want him to do, when you want him to do it.

The only way a grower will follow you is if you've made sure the perceptions of you, your company, and your products are sufficiently elevated. At that stage, the relationship has been created and the farmer will follow you and do what you ask him to do, including commencing the development of his cropping plan.

The key to raising perceptions and building that relationship is spending more time with your grower. The more time you spend with him, the more he gets to know you, and the faster the buying will get underway.



Response #3

You: Where do you want to take your yields in the next three years?

Farmer: I'd like to break 200 bushel.

You: Excellent goal. What is your plan to get there?

Farmer: I don't really have one.

You: We have a plan—it's called a high yield cropping plan. Have you ever done a high yield cropping plan?

Farmer: No, I haven't.

You: Why don't I come back next Tuesday or Wednesday morning. I have 8:00am open on both days, and we can look at your fields. You shouldn't be ordering anything until we have a plan in place for taking your yields to new levels in each of those fields. Which day would work best for you?

Farmer: Let's do it Tuesday.

You: Great. Here's my card with the time on it. I'll see you then. Thanks, and have a great day.

Response #4

You: That's no problem, you can order anytime you want. That's your decision. How long have you been farming?

Farmer: About 20 years.

You: There have been a lot of changes in the past 20 years, haven't there.

Farmer: There sure have.

You: What kinds of changes have you made in your operation over the last 3-4 years?

Farmer: We've gone to narrower rows and got a new planter.

You: How is that working for you?

Farmer: Pretty well so far. How much yield increase will we get from going to narrower rows?

(He's taking you Inside the Circle, so you prepare to take him back out)

You: Most farmers don't get much yield increase because row spacing is not the issue. Row spacing really has very little to do with yield.

Farmer: What do you mean?

You: Where do you want to take your yields over the next three years?

Farmer: I'd like to break 200 bushel.

You: Excellent goal. What's your plan to get there?

Farmer: I don't really have one.

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Farmer: Let's do it Tuesday.

You: Great. Here's my card with the time on it. I'll see you then. Thanks, and have a great day.

(All I changed was the way I responded to his objection)

You need to practice getting past this objection with growers. As I said before, this particular objection is one of the most powerful, order stopping objections there is, and many salespeople don't know how to handle it when it comes up.



Detailed Crop Plan

Grower(s): Order#

Crop:

Field Name	Acres	Crop Planned	Prev Crop	Drainage	Fert.	Plant Population Rec.	Current Bu/1000	Variety Portfolio	Total Units
Home 120	120	F. Corn	Bns	W	M	34,500	5.8	97 Day - ACME 56277	41.4
Johnson 160	140	F. Corn	Bns	W	M	34,500	6.6	98 Day - ACME 55310	48.3
Tommy 200	65	F. Corn	Alfalfa	W	M	34,500	5.8	95 Day - ACME 55427	22.4
Smith 240	160	F. Corn	Peas	W	M	34,500	7.2	97 Day - ACME 56277	55.2
Total Units:									167.3

LEGEND

Drainage	Fertilizer
P = Poor	L = Low
A = Average	M = Medium
W = Well	H = High

Notes:

Spring 28% Pre-Emerge at 10 gal/A _____

10-34-0 at 6 gal/A _____

Crop Planning Specialist: _____

Date: _____

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Understand The Benefits

- 1. Provides a Cohesive Vision**
- 2. Provides the critical financial plan for him and the lender**
- 3. Gets emotion out of the way of the production process**
 - 4. Puts you 3-6 months ahead of schedule**
- 5. Eliminates your greatest obstacle, à la carte buying**

Understand How to Do It

- 1. Let growers know far in advance of your intentions**
- 2. Get out of the product performance information business**
 - 3. Set the date far in advance and stick to it**
 - 4. Continue to remind them of the date all season**
 - 5. Demonstrate the benefits to them**

Writing Crop Plans Before Harvest

Hi John, John Jensen?

Yes.

I'm Rod, Rod Osthus, High Yield Specialist and Director of on Farm Planning for the RC Thomas Company. I specialize in helping farmers work toward making two profits in a single year.

Oh yeah? How the heck do you do that?

We'll get into more detail on that if we decide we are a fit.

But in a nutshell, we start by developing a high yield crop plan based on bushels per 1000 plants and not bushels per acre for each field. Have you ever done a high yield crop plan?

No, I haven't.

When the plan is complete and growers follow it, they can see significant yield increases, 10 to 30%. Then, when the farmer combines those yield increases with high market prices, their profits go way up, they could actually double. But that all depends on how well the grower follows the plan.

How long have you been farming?

25 years. But I've never heard of some of the things you just told me.

Yes, we're unique. The biggest challenge we have to making all of this work, however, will sound pretty silly to you.

What's that?

Getting farmers to stop thinking like farmers and think like businessmen.

What do you mean?

Writing Crop Plans Before Harvest

Every successful businessman knows the first step to having a successful business is early planning. Right?

Yes, that's right.

But many farmers want to put off making any plans for next year's crop until after harvest. They waste valuable time watching markets, input costs and how the current crop may yield. So, we don't work with growers who won't start their high yield crop plans prior to harvest. When do you normally do your cropping plan for next year?

Well, to be honest, I have been one of those who likes to wait and see.

Every grower we work with who has the highest yields and profits every year, all have one thing in common. They all do their cropping plans prior to harvest. What do you think the correlation is?

I don't know.

It takes the EMOTION of markets and so on out of the planning and execution process. The grower makes a pragmatic plan and follows it, regardless of outside interferences and the plan works.

Where do you want to take your yields next year?

I don't know, it depends on the weather mostly.

Well, let's take the weather out of it. Where would you like to take your yields?

How can you take the weather out of it?

Few farmers understand that weather has its greatest impact only when they don't follow the Top 5 Factors to minimize the damage from the environment.

Writing Crop Plans Before Harvest

What the heck are those? I need to know what those are.

If we decide to work together, you will get the opportunity to rely on those essential Top 5 Factors. How interested are you in what we do with growers to help them raise yields and profits?

I'm very interested.

Ok. We will start by looking at your fields. When would be a good time to do the field tour? I happen have tomorrow open.

How much time do you need?

It depends on how many fields I will be working with. How many fields do you have?

I have 12.

We always start with 1/3 of the acres on a first-year client. Would 4 fields be about 1/3 of your acres?

Yeah, easily.

How about tomorrow at 9 am?

That will work fine.

Ok, great, You will love this System.

Summary

Nothing happens inside any seed company until an order is written—no one in the company has a job to do. Delayed ordering affects everyone in the company in a negative way. It wastes everyone's time. Most companies are not in control of their time, their inventory, or their profit because farmers delay ordering so long. Those companies are unable to accurately plan schedules, inventory needs, manpower needs, equipment needs, and so on.

Ag sales reps need to get farmers on their schedules. Most reps lose 6-7 months of prime selling season every year and farmers lose the opportunity to raise a better crop just because they wait so long to place their order.

The biggest obstacle sales reps face in getting sales increases is getting prospects and customers on THEIR TIME SCHEDULE AND NOT THE CUSTOMER'S. That means getting them OUT of the Ag Cycle, and on a NEW TIME CYCLE so they're able to utilize the best time of year to sell—pre-harvest. Once you get them out of the Ag Cycle, and you're ready to begin developing their cropping plans, guess what? They're ready, too.

DECISION TIME — DEVELOP CROP PLAN

Strategy 1 Decide to ask EVERY customer to start their crop plans NOW.

What I'm going to do: Set a deadline for having contacted every customer

When I'm going to do it: Today!

How I'm going to do it: Write my story word-for-word

Strategy 2 Get help and support to achieve this goal

What I'm going to do: Partner with another Team member who will do it also

When I'm going to do it: Today

How I'm going to do it: Plan to role play practice with each other, make customer contacts in each territory the same days. Support and help each other

Strategy 3 Make the most progress the fastest

What I'm going to do: Get my best customers in place first

When I'm going to do it: At the start of my crop planning strategy

How I'm going to do it: Practice my story, take my growers to their fields, focus on increasing yields by field, starting with the seed for that field.

DECISION TIME — DEVELOP CROP PLAN

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: _____

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**“We don’t rise to the level of our expectations,
we fall to the level of our training.”**

-ARCHILOCHUS

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