

# SEED SELLER BLUEPRINT

## Season 3: Confirming Season



(7)

Harvester Ride



(8)

Confirming the Order



(9)

Field Visit to Protect Sale

## Season 3: Confirming Season



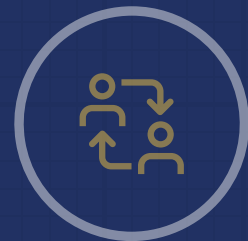
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(7)

Harvester Ride

## CONFIRMING SEASON

# (7) Harvester Ride



### Do You Know?

- The right perceptions you want to create or reinforce on the harvester?
- The wrong perceptions you want to negate or keep from forming on the harvester?
- Whose harvester should be ridden first—new prospects or current buyers?
- The six key steps to ensuring the most successful harvester rides?
- All the benefits both sales reps and customers receive from harvester rides?
- Harvester rides are the simplest form of customer contact because they require no planning or appointments?

## The Third Most Important Customer Contact of the Selling Season

Why is riding combines one of the most important aspects of your relationship with customers? Because customers are forming their opinions (perceptions) of you, your company, and your products while harvesting your varieties. And you must be there to reinforce the right perceptions and delete the wrong ones.

When customers order your products for the first time, they instantly begin devoting their thoughts to one single idea—harvest. They can't wait to see how the new varieties they've ordered will perform. If these new customers have been long-time, loyal buyers of someone else's products, they may actually want you to lose the contest. In fact, most first-time buyers want that to happen, so their past buying decisions are not proven wrong.

But your products don't have to out-yield the competition every time in order to win the new customer over to your side. You simply have to show them that there is more that goes into getting a good crop than just yield. In fact, there are more than 1,000 variables that go into raising a crop, but the grower himself can control only a handful of them. And since all those variables can distort yield performance, you need to be there with the customer, representing yourself, your company, and your varieties during harvest so he doesn't make any wrong decisions. You need to be there to develop a strong relationship, so the farmer looks to you for guidance in helping control all those other variables. Every year at harvest time, you need to make sure that both your prospects and your customers develop the right perceptions and not the wrong ones by being there on the harvester.

## The Best Time to Finalize Next Year's Cropping Plan

What better time is there to confirm a field-by-field match-up of the products your customers will be using when they plant their crop next spring? The harvester ride offers a ring-side seat, along with a captive audience, to revisit the yield goals that were set for each field earlier in the summer. Not only will the customer's cropping plan be in place, but every product you sold him for each field will be confirmed. This is a great opportunity to leave your customer in a positive frame of mind because he'll feel really good about having an actual plan to raise the best crop possible next spring.

## Protocols for Riding Harvesters

**Every Sales Rep Can Make Riding Harvesters Their No.1 Tool for Finalizing Cropping Plans By Following Six Key Steps.**

- 1 Make Time to Ride Harvesters
- 2 Speak the 21st Century Production Language on the Harvester
- 3 Stay Outside the Circle to Lead Customers Where You Want Them to Go
- 4 Prepare a Progress Report
- 5 Understand the Process of Riding Harvesters
- 6 Practice a Harvester Riding Story



# 1 Make Time to Ride Harvesters



## What Do You Normally Do During Harvest?

List the duties and activities you normally do during harvest.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Indicate which ones you will deprioritize or eliminate during harvest in order to ride more harvesters.*

## The 4 Biggest Obstacles That Keep Me From Achieving My Goal of Riding Every Customer's Harvester

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Speak the 21st Century Production Language on the Harvester

Ask questions like:

1. What percent of those ears (or plants) coming into that header would you say are full?
2. What is your current yield per thousand plant goal in this field?
3. What is your yield per thousand plant goal for this field next year?
4. When you achieve next year's yield per thousand plant goal, what will your yield per acre be?



## 3 Stay Outside the Circle to Lead Customers Where You Want Them to Go

Be prepared for questions/comments like:

1. What do you think the markets are going to do?
2. What does the crop look like in other areas?
3. Why weren't you guys in the yield trials?
4. What was your best hybrid in the plots this year?
5. Where are you guys priced?
6. The crop isn't as good as I thought it would be.
7. Your variety is getting beat by 20 bushels.



## 4 Prepare a Progress Report

Progress is...












If buyers don't feel they're making progress working with you, they won't follow you or stay with you!

The Only True Measure of Progress You Make With Buyers During the Season is...

### Progress Report Ratings and Checklist

Rate 1-10, 10 Being the Highest

CUSTOMER																		
	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check	Rate	Check
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					

EXAMPLE

The Progress Report supplies you with two of the most important pieces of information you need on every customer throughout the season. First, it follows the SeedSeller Blueprint and keeps track of those key contacts you make with each grower from planting until harvest. Second, it monitors the buyer's thinking during each of those contacts and tells you what you need to be working on with that grower to change his thinking so he thinks more like you in key areas.

The Progress Report is a tool that helps you keep the most important contacts you must be making with buyers at the forefront of your schedule and makes sure you never miss a single one. It's like having a crystal ball that helps you know what every one of your buyers is thinking, at any time during the year. It helps you monitor their thoughts in many different categories, including how loyal they are to you, and how long they intend to remain your customer. That's powerful and very useful information.



The Progress Report is a simple tool that allows you to check a box once you've completed each of the Blueprint contacts. It also allows you to rate the level of buy-in a customer has for what you are teaching him. The rating is based on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the lowest level of buy-in. Each time you make a Blueprint contact with a grower, put a number in the blank, indicating how much they are thinking the way you want them to think. The lower the number, the more work you have in front of you to get the grower to think more like you.

For example, if a buyer is splitting his planter by putting your seed in half of the planter, and a competitor's seed in the other half, you would rate him a "1" in understanding how to properly measure varietal performance and achieve maximum yields in a field. His thinking is wrong. Once you put that rating in the Progress Report, you will spend time during each of the key contacts working to change that line-of-thinking. As his thinking changes toward how you want him to think about splitting his planter, you will improve his rating along the way. He may be a "1" at the Planter Visit, but during the StoryBook presentation he's a "4". And by the time you ride the harvester with him, hopefully, you've helped change his thinking to an "8" or a "9." That means he won't be splitting his planter anymore.

A completed Progress Report is a summary of your observations of your buyer's thoughts and actions from planting until harvest. You listen to what they say and watch what they do—it starts at the planter visit, and continues throughout the entire growing season. Your goal is to take observational readings on each customer's attitude every time you have contact with him on the phone or in person. That way you can predict, with relatively good accuracy, what that customer is going to say and do during your relationship, because what he says and does represents what he's thinking. The goal is to help buyers develop the kind of attitude you want them to have and that will bring them the most success long-term. In order for them to make maximum progress, you need to take them where they don't know they need to go.



## Signals Indicating You Need to Help a Grower Make Faster Progress in Changing How He Thinks

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| → _____ | → _____ |
| → _____ | → _____ |
| → _____ | → _____ |
| → _____ | → _____ |

The Progress Report is the easiest and most effective way to keep track of what every farmer who plants your seed is thinking throughout the season, especially when it comes to how to increase yields. When buyers begin thinking like you, they do what you ask them to do, when you ask them to do it. But it's virtually impossible to know the state of mind of customers at any given time without a Progress Report. You will find the Progress Report to be a very useful and valuable tool for getting customers to follow your lead. Customers bring about, what they think about. It's easy to predict customer behavior when you monitor what they say and what they do, since those things tell you what they're thinking.

The greatest and most dangerous form of separation between a sales rep and his customers is not thinking alike. Everything farmers do comes from what they're thinking and believing. In order to get customers to follow you, you need to get them to think like you first.

Riding the Harvester with a buyer is the final method for measuring how much the grower has changed his thinking (**made Progress**) since planting!

## 5 Understand the Process of Riding Harvesters

**Like the Planter Visit, Riding Harvesters is one of the most efficient strategies a sales rep can execute. Take a look at all the reasons why it's so efficient.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| → Most efficient way to meet customers and new prospects           | → Most efficient way to institute changes he needs to make next spring |
| → Most efficient way to keep customers out of the Ag Cycle         | → Most efficient way of getting the grower's mind in balance           |
| → Most efficient way to confirm cropping plans and finalize orders | → Most efficient way to get the grower to plant product portfolios     |

## 6

**Practice a Harvester Riding Story****Understand you are not interfering with farmers time during harvest.**

Most farmers like visits by sales reps during harvest when...

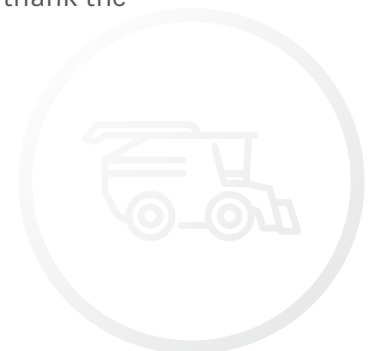
- the call is well-organized
- you bring information to them they didn't know
- you have a well-practiced, exciting story
- he learns from you being there
- you keep him Outside the Circle and looking to the future
- you keep the call brief
- a conclusion is reached at the end of the ride
- the grower knows what is going to happen next

**Understand you don't need test plots and yield info gathering.**

- 10 times more *agronomic* information is gathered on harvester rides than from test plots
- 5 times more *yield* information is gathered on harvester rides than from test plots
- Test plots put the entire responsibility for product performance on the product
- Benefits of harvester rides far exceed all benefits of plots and side-by-sides
- Test plots cannot create relationship bonds as strongly as harvester rides
- Harvester rides are the only way to negate the value of yield monitoring for making future cropping decisions
- Harvester rides are the fastest and most effective way to learn about products
- Harvester rides are the ONLY way to establish the correct matchup of variety-by-field

**Understand you're rebranding the grower.**

- You get to converse with your grower about the fields you signed
- You get your grower feeling good about the fields that qualified for signing
- The grower gets to witness how organized you are about getting your signs gathered and put away
- You get the opportunity to excite your grower about erecting signs next year
- You get to "rebrand" your grower
- You get the opportunity to thank the grower



### Remember you can take care of concerns that surface with every buyer and customer just by being there.

- Most growers have challenges that would otherwise remain unidentified and unsolved
- You ensure that EVERY grower is happy by the end of harvest
- There are no unpleasant surprises at your future grower meetings
- You get to review and practice your company's trouble-call protocols
- You learn more about your products and how they react in all kinds of environments
- You being there will be perceived as providing outstanding service

### Remember this is NOT the time of year to avoid direct grower contact—it's the time to initiate it!

- Your products are performing in front of your growers and you need to be there
- This is the easiest prospecting opportunity you will get all year long
- Most prospects and growers are receptive because they are looking for answers
- Salespeople having NOTHING else more important to do during this time of year
- You know where to find virtually every grower during harvest

### Establish Goals for Every Harvester Ride.

1. Get an appointment
2. Reconfirm an order or cropping plan
3. Reassure the grower
4. Introduce yourself
5. Get a second combine ride
6. Change how he *thinks*



## Develop the Right ATTITUDE!



A positive attitude that looks toward the future allows customers to deal with disappointments better.

Everyone looks to their leader for the **correct** attitude. Do you have a **future statement** that will help the grower look ahead to the future?

Grower says \_\_\_\_\_

Seller says \_\_\_\_\_

Grower says \_\_\_\_\_

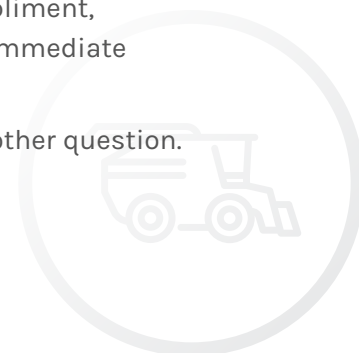
Seller says \_\_\_\_\_

## Develop a Plan of Attack!

- Send prospects and customers a 2-minute video about you and your intentions
- Mail an oversized postcard to prospects and customers and tell them you're coming to ride their harvester
- Just stop by
- Each day, make a list of the harvesters you are going to ride
- If you don't know the prospect, find out his name during the ride and record it
- Plan to ride at least 6-8 harvesters a day for 4 weeks
- Ask for an appointment to come back during harvest to do business

## Establishing Contact

- After getting out of your vehicle, walk into the field and get an ear of corn or pull up a plant of the crop being harvested.
- As the harvester is coming your way, hold it up, point to it and smile. You will have the operator curious and he will want to stop.
- Jump onto the harvester before he gets out of the cab, give him a quick compliment, introduce yourself, greet him, and follow it with a question. This puts you in immediate control and he develops positive perceptions of you.
- Offer him a bottle of water or a can of pop and some information and ask another question.



## Riding Harvester Story For a **New Prospect** (Going for 3 Yeses)

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'm out with my farmer customers, riding their combines and seeing how the crop is doing. I'm finding out a lot. Do you mind if I make a couple of rounds with you?

**What are you selling?**

I'm not here to sell you anything. We may not be a fit. But I would like to look at your crop if that's ok.

**Ok, get in.**

Thanks. Nice combine, how long have you had it?

**Oh, it's about 3 years old.**

It looks like you really take good care of your equipment. That's important isn't it.

**Yes, it is, we try. We can always do better.**

It sure helps the trade in value when it looks this good, doesn't it.

**Yes, it does.**

It's been quite a year hasn't it.

**Yes, and not a fun one either. What are things looking like in other areas? What are you seeing out there?**

It's Variable. Yields are all over the place. There ARE a few trends we see though.

**Yeah? Like what?**

Well, the guys who had a solid cropping plan and followed it, have the best crop by far. They had the fewest surprises because their plan was comprehensive enough to cover most of the variables.

**There were sure a lot of variables and surprises this year. It's hard to decide what to do different next year?**

You know, I've been in this business almost 50 years and there are really no surprises. It's just a matter of how well we prepare for every year. I learned that again this year. The guys who planned early and followed the plan have much better crops. I mean, MUCH better—100-bushel differences. That's why I'm riding combines. I can simplify it for most customers.

**Really? Wow. What have you figured out?**

You can't make any decisions on varieties for next year based on what happened this year. What you can do is put together a plan with what we know to protect yourself against variables that show up in different degrees every year. Have you ever done a high yield crop plan?

**No, I haven't. What does that look like?**

**Riding Harvester Story For a New Prospect** (Going for 3 Yeses)

It's a field by variety plan that sets a bushels per 1000 plant goal for each field. And since raising a top crop is a System, it includes all of the things that need to be included to achieve top yields.

**What is bushels per 1000?**

We don't use plant population or row spacings to get high yields anymore. We use bushels per 1000 plants and it always works. Farmers who follow the plan raise yields the equivalent of their population in one year. It could 25-35 bushels per acre or more.

**Really?**

Yes, have you ever heard of that concept before. No, I haven't. Everyone talks to me about plant populations.

Most farmers are already planting too thick.

**I've never had a seed guy tell me that before.**

When we get to the end of the field, I have a bottle of water or some soda for you along with a candy bar. If you want to take 10 minutes, I can show you briefly how it works, and also show you a copy of the high yield crop plan.

**Ok. We can do that.**

Would it be ok if I came back and road with you again in a couple of days? I would love to see a couple more of your fields to see if we are a fit. We may not be a fit, but if we are, I can help you a lot.

**That would be fine.**

Do you know where you will be on Wednesday?

**Not sure, but here's my number. Give me a call and I will tell where we are.**

Great. Thanks so much, I will see you Wednesday.

## Riding Harvester Story For a **Current Customer With No Crop Plan In Place**

Hi Jim, it's nice to see you.

**It's nice to see you too Rod. What's going on?**

I told you I would be coming to ride a couple of rounds with you during harvest.

**Ok, well, the crop isn't very good. It didn't matter what kind of a plan you had this year, mother nature pretty well through that out the window. I don't even want to think about what I'm going to do next year.**

Well, we'll talk about that. In this area mother nature kind of overwhelmed us with the drought, wind, rootworm and disease. But believe it or not, it DID matter what kind of plan a farmer had and whether or not he followed it.

**Seriously?**

Absolutely. My customers who had a plan that we developed early and fully adopted that plan, executed it to the letter. Their crops are head and shoulders above everyone else's.

**Even with the drought?**

Even with the drought. Nitrogen is the antibiotic for stalk rot and drought and they had healthier plants early that went down after what moisture there was. There were some areas where drought was just too severe, but in most cases the plan worked.

**I really don't want to think about next year until I get the crop out.**

I know exactly how you feel. I work with 60 farmers, and I'm not letting any of them get caught in the trap they got caught in this year.

**What trap is that?**

Putting off creating a high yield crop plan and sticking to it. It just takes deciding that feeling bad about what we can't control is not the kind of feeling you want to live with everyday. Every successful businessman knows the first step to having a successful business is planning. Right?

**I guess so.**

But many farmers want to put off making any plans for next year's crop until after harvest and this is not the time to do that. You already have all of the information you're going to need to make a high yield crop for next year. There is no sense in wasting valuable time. I can help you simplify the process and make a plan for next year that will be successful.

**Really. What have you figured out?**

There is no reason to wait. Let's start over with a field by variety plan, resetting a bushels per 1000 plant goal for each field. And since raising a top crop is a System, it includes all of the things that need to be included to achieve top yields. When we get to the end of the field, I have a bottle of water or some soda for you along with a candy bar. I will get that for you and I will show you the cropping plan I already have started for you. I will get your approval to this point, then finish it for you. I will come back on Thursday, ride with you again and we can finalize it. Does that sound like a plan.

**Yeah, it does. I am starting to feel better already.**

Don't let this year get you down. There is nothing we can do to change it. What we can change is how we react to it and take charge of our crop for next year by doing a great job of planning now.

## Riding Harvester Story For a **Current Customer With a Crop Plan Already In Place**

Hi Dave, it's nice to see you.

**It's nice to see you too Rod.**

I told you I would be coming to ride a couple of rounds with you during harvest. How's the crop looking?

**It's variable, depending where we got the rain at the right time. But compared to other reports I'm hearing, I feel pretty good.**

Well, you did a great job of following the crop plan.

**Yeah, I stayed pretty close to it. I didn't want to put on that second application of fungicide, but you told me to stick to the plan and I found out it really paid off. The guys who didn't apply fungicides watched their crop die early.**

Dave, you planned early and fully adopted the plan. That always pays off.

**Jump in the combine, I want to see what you think I need to change for next year.**

Ok great.

As you watch those ears come in the header (could be plants in the case of other crops) where do you think your bushels per 1000 ended up?

**Well, despite the weather, it ended up about 7 or so. You know it was at 8 after planting, but we got a little short on moisture and I have a lot of bare tips which didn't allow the plant to support the 8 bushels per 1000.**

Yeah, but I remember at planting how you stopped planting in that cold ground and came back 4 days later. Do you think that paid off?

**Oh, it paid off big time. Several guys either have poor stands, low bushels per 1000 or they replanted because they put that seed in ground that was too cold.**

Is there anything you are thinking about changing for next year?

**Not much I guess, unless there are some different varieties I should try.**

No, I have the plan we put together in July, I want to finalize that with you as we go through harvest and make sure we have everything place. What I want to do today is confirm the variety by field plan, I will do the rest. If there is a variety you aren't particularly happy with for some reason, let me know, we can discuss it. But I've been in all of your fields, and I think the match ups were great last year. And the portfolio we have for next year is going to address your needs also as we rotate crops. I don't see any reason to change the matchups we made in July.

**Ok, great.**

I'm going to finish this plan with all of the inputs, pricing and so on, and I will be back in a couple of days to go over it with you. I know you like to pay early so I will have all of that figured out too.

**That sounds good. Thanks Rod**

Thank you, Dave. I appreciate your time and your business. Have a great day.

## Practice Playing 3 Different Roles

1. **Outside Operator:** This person is neither the landowner or the farmer. He is the hired man or someone else who has no REAL responsibility for the operation, except that he does what he's told. This could be the person operating the harvester when you arrive or it could be the person who tells you where the owner is—this person does not make the buying decisions.
2. **Owner:** This person owns the land and/or farms the land. This could be the person operating the harvester when you arrive—this is the person who makes the buying decisions.
3. **Sales Rep:** This is the sales representative.

Based on the previous principles, how many harvesters will you ride this fall? \_\_\_\_\_

Keep a log of every harvester you ride:

Date	Time of Day	Make & Model	Varieties Harvested	Results of Ride	Next Move

## Customer Follow-Up

Send a Thank You Note to every harvester operator you rode with, thanking him for the experience. Send a note to the owner, if he wasn't the operator, letting him know what happened. Fill these out the evening of the ride and mail them the next day. You will create a customer.



## Summary

**Few sales reps really understand the opportunities that are presented by riding combines. Take a look—they're almost limitless.**

**Riding combines gives sellers the opportunity to:**

- Link customers closer to your company by talking about your company during the ride.
- Link customers closer to you by telling them things they don't know about you.
- Learn more about your products by seeing them under many different management conditions.
- Provide more personal attention by being there as promised.
- Solve problems by confronting the issues right when they're occurring.
- Create excitement by showing excitement yourself.
- Gather yield information by keeping records on each ride.
- Increase positive perceptions by looking professional.
- Gather testimonials from farmers.
- Reassure the customer by giving positive reinforcement.

## DECISION TIME – HARVESTER RIDE

### 🔖 Strategy 1 DECIDE I am going to ride harvesters

What I'm going to do: Reserve those days on my calendar

When I'm going to do it: Today

How I'm going to do it: List the reasons why I need to ride harvesters and the benefits of doing it.

### 🔖 Strategy 2 Create my riding harvester story for customers

What I'm going to do: Write my story word for word.

When I'm going to do it: When I have identified what I need to say and do on every ride.

How I'm going to do it: Write the complete dialogue including what will happen after the ride.

### 🔖 Strategy 3 Role Play Practice

What I'm going to do: Practice presenting the story and look for how it can be improved.

When I'm going to do it: As soon as my story is completed

How I'm going to do it: Set up harvester scenarios. Act out the ride.

📌 **Strategy 4** Plan to ride with my best customers first

What I'm going to do: Send a card telling them I'm coming to ride

When I'm going to do it: 2 weeks prior to harvest

How I'm going to do it: Create an attractive over-sized card for my largest, most loyal customers then set a goal for each ride

📌 **Strategy 5** Create a harvester riding story for **prospects**

What I'm going to do: Write a word for word harvester story for **prospects**

When I'm going to do it: After I have completed my current customer Story

How I'm going to do it: Set a goal for riding with each prospect  
Be different from the competition when riding with prospects

📌 **Strategy 6** Heat the Prospects I want to ride with.

What I'm going to do: Send 3 mailers to each prospect, one week apart.

When I'm going to do it: Prior to calling on prospects

How I'm going to do it: Create pieces of literature that will tell prospects who I am and the value I bring.

