

# SEED SELLER BLUEPRINT

LIVE STREAM



(8)

Approving the Plan



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# APPROVAL SEASON

## (8) Approving the Plan



### Introduction

The goal of this discussion is to demonstrate how the standard practice of **confirming orders is outdated and needs to be replaced with approving plans**. When sellers approve the production plan instead of just confirming it, the seller is put into a position of authority and leadership. In today's marketplace changes are taking place so fast that customers can't keep up. They need the leadership of a professional, knowledgeable, seed advisor to achieve their yield and profit goals. The act of approving, not only denotes leadership, but also puts the sales rep in control of the decision making process.

**Note:** In this discussion the term plan, or production plan will refer to both an order or a complete cropping plan with a grower.

### Follow the presentation and complete the following.

It's \_\_\_\_\_ approval season. Approval of the plan must be an \_\_\_\_\_ process.

What's the Difference Between Confirmation and Approval?

The difference between confirmation and approval is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Confirmation defined:** Providing \_\_\_\_\_ that something is \_\_\_\_\_.

Example: The sales rep says, "I want to confirm your production plan with you to see if you want to make any changes."

**Approval defined:** Subject to \_\_\_\_\_ by the leader.

Example: The sales reps says, "I'm here to put final approval on the cropping plan we put in place for next year."

**You must lead customers where they don't know they need to go.**

## How do you tell if you are being perceived as the leader?

They want you to \_\_\_\_\_ of them and their actions. You're not trying to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

They should be \_\_\_\_\_.

### Remember:

When you approve a plan it is automatically \_\_\_\_\_. Confirmation is \_\_\_\_\_ in the act of approval.

### Getting Approval Requires:

- Preparing customers to want your approval
- Ensuring customers know the goal and expectations to achieve it
- Supporting customers' positive actions toward the goal
- Customers knowing when final approval will be given
- A new sales approach and sales story
- Role play practice

### Preparing customers to want your approval

Ask them the 3 key questions they want answers to.

1. **Where do you want to take your yields next year?** Make them give you a number.
2. **What's your plan to get there?** They won't have one, but let them know you do.
3. **What's keeping you from getting there?** Not having the right plan.

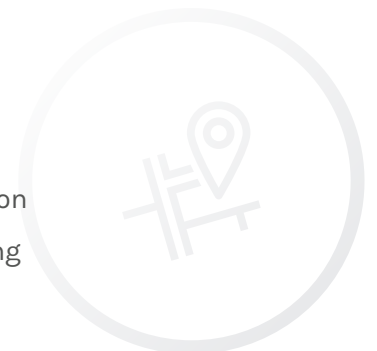
### Ensuring customers know the goal and expectations to achieve it

1. Set a bu/1000 plant goal with each customer for every field
2. Production plans must be developed prior to harvest
3. The Top 5 Factors must be followed
4. The crop must be protected at all cost throughout the season
5. Check for understanding and agreement to the above expectations

### Supporting customers' positive actions toward the goal

Execute key steps of the SeedSeller Blueprint

1. Seed delivery—ensure agreement of goals for the new production season
2. Planter visits—document and compliment adherence to proper planting



3. Post planting report card visit—validate changes made during planting
4. Field visits—ensuring the crop is on track toward the intended goal
5. Harvest rides—recognize grower adherence to the plan

### **Customers knowing when final approval will be given**

1. Final approval of the plan will be given at harvest

### **A new sales approach and sales story**

A sales approach and sales story designed to:

1. Excite customers about setting a new, higher yield goal
2. Excite customers about the process of achieving the new goal
3. Challenge customers to follow each of the processes
4. Set a deadline for goal achievement

### **Role Play Practice**

1. Write your story for each step on the Blueprint, word for word
2. Put your story into storybook form
3. Practice and role play the story at least 12 times with a partner before delivering it

If plan approval is one of the primary processes used to keep customers, why isn't it more effective in doing that?

→ Timely approval isn't being used as the primary tactic to lead customers.

→ Sellers are not in control, therefore, unable to get customers to follow them.

**Every step in the SeedSeller Blueprint is designed for sellers to APPROVE what their customers are doing at each step.**

**Example A: SeedSeller Blueprint Step 1: Seed Delivery**

- At this contact, the seller approves the customer’s seed warehouse and/ or method of handling the seed prior to planting.
- At this contact the seller also approves the steps customers will be asked to take throughout the upcoming production season.

**Example B: SeedSeller Blueprint Step 2: Planter Visits**

At this contact the seller approves the customer’s planting process, adherence to the Top 5 Factors and the willingness to protect the crop at all cost throughout the season.

The goal when executing the approval strategy is to take control, leading customers where they don’t know they need to go.

**Approval Instead of Confirmation Means**

The story will change. How will the story change?

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The approach will change. How will the approach change?

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The timing will change. How will the timing change?

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The language will change. How will the language change?

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**Approving Means:**

Not just reviewing the cropping plan every time you're with a customer, but approving how each customer has been following every step in the plan throughout the season.

**Do You Know?**

What the average order retention rate should be? \_\_\_\_\_%

Do you know what the average customer retention rate should be? \_\_\_\_\_%

What do you know about those two percentages? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is there a direct correlation between customer retention rate and order retention rate?

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How many times should you be approving plans during the production season?

A minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Plan approval is a continuous process.

It uses the grower's yield goal for each field as the basis for every conversation.

### Do You Know?

#### Why plan approval is seldom used instead of confirmation?

1. Sellers are writing orders and not detailed production plans
2. Sellers haven't prepared customers enough to accept plan approval

#### How to make sure every unit of seed you sold gets planted?

Assign every variety to a field along with a \_\_\_\_\_ goal for that field.

#### What's the easiest NO a customer can give when it comes to accepting the plan?

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#### True approval requires getting physical through face-to-face contact.

Do you know how to get a buyer to tell you face-to-face whether or not the plan you've developed with him is firm? \_\_\_\_\_

#### How much it costs your company to return (haul back) a unit of seed?

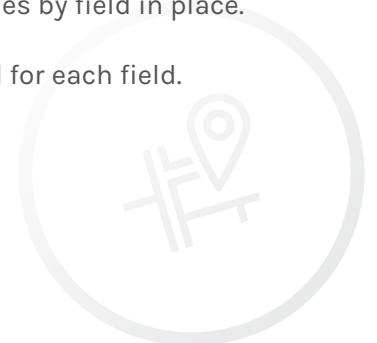
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#### How to approve plans by field.

What happens when you approve plans by field?

1. It forces the customer to \_\_\_\_\_ on what really matters, how to raise yields in each field. To maximize his farm yield, he must first maximize the yield in each field.
2. It causes customers to \_\_\_\_\_ that each field requires a different plan.
3. It \_\_\_\_\_ the entire operation by putting strict schedules by field in place.
4. It \_\_\_\_\_ information needed to support the yield goal for each field.

**It results in goal achievement in every field.**



## Orders vs Cropping Plans

### Match the Differences

- Are not commitments. They have no attachment to field or yield goals.
  - Are not a real order, only a booking because they aren't based on solid planning.
  - Are not a business plan, therefore all other parts of the business remain in limbo.
  - Have no direct impact on yield because they're part of an à la carte strategy to raising a crop
  - Are based on obsolete information— which varieties performed the best last year.
  - Most often include varieties that are popular instead of portfolios designed to protect.
  - Are written based on what sales reps tell growers about their products.
- A. Are a systems approach to raising a top crop and directly enhancing yields.
  - B. Are based on fields and yield goals for each of those fields.
  - C. Are based on variety portfolios.
  - D. Are a great learning tool for farmers.
  - E. Allow all other parts of the business— marketing, input purchases etc. to move forward.
  - F. Based on achieving future yield goals, not on past history.
  - G. Are true orders because they're based on real plans for each field.

### Indicate whether each of the following is part of an order or part of a cropping plan.

Order = O Plan = CP

- \_\_\_\_\_ No field visit required.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teach growers nothing about raising a crop.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Require direct field visits by both the customer and seller.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Growers feel they can change or cancel anytime for any reason.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Customers don't want to change or cancel once they are written.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Customers are not vested in the execution and outcome.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Every variety is assigned to a specific field.



## The Approval Process Teaches You Which Customers Are:

- Buying into your plan and following your lead
- On your side and want you to win
- Preparing themselves to win
- Going to be the easiest to work with
- The ones you can depend on to achieve your sales goal
- The ones who will make your job fun and rewarding

## Every Sales Rep Can Maximize Sales and Customer Retention Rates by Following Seven Important Steps

1. Stop writing orders and write production plans with every customer
2. Talk plans and not orders with growers by focusing on solving their pain point
3. Approve plans with customers by field
4. Make the plan known to all suppliers immediately after it's developed to create a higher level of commitment by the farmer to stick to the plan
5. Ensure all company customer communications refer to his plan, not his order
6. Make plan approval part of every step in the Blueprint
7. Make early planning and early delivery standard parts of every plan



## Role Play

You stop to see Brian, one of your good customers. He is working in his shop.

Good morning, Brian, it's great to see you again. Am I interrupting something very important?

**Hi Rod, how's it going? No, I'm just cleaning things up after harvest.**

Despite the weather we had a pretty great crop didn't we. (notice I took him inside the circle to get the weather and crop conversation out of the way)

**Yeah, we sure did. In fact, it shocked the heck out of me how good everything was. But these input costs are going to kill me next year. (he wants to stay in the circle, but I'm taking him out)**

No, they won't. I'm here to approve your production plan for next year and that plan is designed to lower the cost of every bushel you produce. That's what you want isn't it? (out of the circle we go)

**Absolutely. But how do you plan to do that?**

It's probably been a while since you've looked at the plan we put together last summer, but it's designed to focus on one field at a time and achieve new yield levels in each of those fields. I'm here to put my stamp of approval on that plan because it's one of the best plans I've helped develop all season. It's going to work.

**Ok, well, now you've got me excited.**

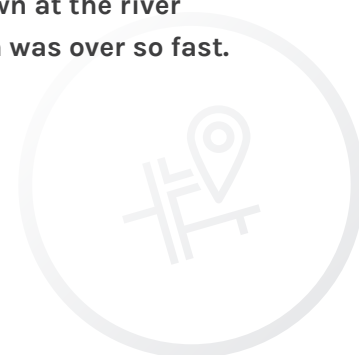
Can we go into your office and visit about it? I brought some egg coffee which my wife made that we can enjoy while we visit.

**Awesome. Be sure to thank her. Come on in.**

Is that picture of your son with that huge deer from this fall? I don't think I've seen that one.

**Yeah, he's pretty proud of it. He got it the first day of hunting season down at the river bottom. He was very happy but also a little disappointed that his season was over so fast.**

Wow, that is a beautiful buck. How old is Trevor now?



**He just turned 16 and got his license last week. I'm happy he can finally drive himself back and forth to school and practices.**

I know how that is. He's a great looking kid. How's the rest of the family?

**They're all doing really well, thanks.**

How's that coffee?

**Delicious, as always. I need to get her recipe.**

No problem. As I said, I stopped by to put my final approval on your production plan for next year. Your seed is getting ready to be processed and packaged so I wanted to make sure we are on the same page so I can approve the plan and make sure everything gets into our system on time.

**If you're going to approve the plan, it sounds like it's your plan and not mine.**

Brian, you are in charge of your operation. Your number job is perfect execution of the production plan, which is the hardest part. My job is to make sure the best plan is put in place for my customers, not just sell them some seed. Remember how we set bushels per 1000 plant goals for each field? Remember how we selected one variety for each field to allow that field to max out in yield? Do you remember we did things like that?

**Yeah, I remember, now that you mention it.**

That's my job, helping create the plan. That's why it's my job to approve the plan. Now, remember, that plan is only as good as how well it's executed. But you are the best when it comes to execution of the plan. **The bottom line is, if I don't approve of the plan, that means it's because it's not a good plan.** There are reps out there right now telling their customers to increase populations to increase yield, that's a horrible plan that I would not approve. And if I don't approve a customer's plan, I am not working with that customer. Does that make sense?

**Yeah, it sure does. I got a lot of faith in your Rod, and I know you will be watching how I execute the plan.**

I sure will. I will be giving you my approval on every step in the plan.

So, let me start by asking if there any changes in your production acres for the coming year? (Notice, I didn't ask about changes in the plan, only about changes in acres)

**As a matter of fact, I just picked up another 360 acres yesterday that will be going to corn.**

That's great, where is the farm?

**It's the Hoffman place 3 miles straight north.**

Oh, that is a nice farm. I know where it is. Actually, the soil type is a lot lighter than your used to, isn't it?

**Yea it sure is. I'm not sure what varieties to plant there.**

How many different fields are on that farm?

**It's divided into just two different fields, separated by a highway.**

I would recommend a couple of different varieties that like the lighter soils.

**Yea, I am glad you came by. I really didn't know what to put on there—I am not used to that light of ground.**

Let's take a few minutes and go look at both of those fields now. I want you to tell me what you know about that farm.

**Ok, great.**

Now that we've seen the fields and talked about them in detail, I would recommend hybrids D and E over there. I will have you plant D on the east field and E on the west field.

We know with that light soil, the conditions will be right for planting earlier than your other fields. These varieties love lighter ground and they also have exceptional stalks if you want to harvest them last.

**That is exactly what I want.**

I'm going to change the plan to include these new varieties. Your discounts will also increase.

**Ok great.**

Now that we have your new farm taken care of, let's look at the rest of the plan.

On the Johnson farm we set a bushels per 1000 plant goal of 7 for next year, up from 6 in the past years. When we hit 7 your yield will go from an average of 204 to 238 or more. I recommended variety A for that field. Does that ring a bell?



**It sure does. I would love it hit close to that 240 mark.**

You will and maybe even exceed it. Plans like these almost always work.

We set a bushels per 1000 plant goal for the Smith farm of 7 also. That would be up from 5.5. That would take your yield in that field from about 187 to again, 238 or more, a 51-bushel jump. I am recommending variety B for the Smith farm.

**Wow. That would be awesome.**

We set your bushels per 1000 plant goal for the home field at 8 bushels per 1000. You have been hovering around 7 so we need to go for 8 now. That would bring your yield from about 240 average to over 270. We will be on our way to 300. I am actually going to split that field exactly in half since it is so big and put two varieties on that field. Varieties C and F.

**Whatever you think.**

Ok, I will apply a planting population of 34,000 to these fields and give you the final numbers. I assume you want to take advantage of the early pay discounts. They will be substantial.

**Absolutely.**

Ok, Brian. Thanks so much for your time and for your check. I'm going to give you a copy of the plan. I will stamp it first to show that it's been approved. Brian, you have a great plan to blow the doors off both yields and profits next year. Congratulations and thanks so much. It is great working with you. Thanks also for your time.

**Thank YOU Rod. I really appreciate the help.**

Totally my pleasure.

Enjoy the rest of your day.



## Summary

Field sellers who approve production plans, whether it is a complete cropping plan or just an order, have the largest sales increases and the fewest cancelations every year. Approving plans is not only about executing the strategy, but it's also about using approval as a training tool for customers. The Approval process trains customers to follow the seller's lead and allow them to do the things needed to help customers achieve their goals.

If you aren't currently using the approval process, you need to start. It will increase both sales retention and customer retention rates. Plus, you will have happier, more successful customers and that is the goal isn't it?



## DECISION TIME – APPROVING THE PLAN

### 🔖 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:

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When I'm going to do it:

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How I'm going to do it:

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🔖 **Strategy 5**

What I'm going to do:

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When I'm going to do it:

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How I'm going to do it:

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🔖 **Strategy 6**

What I'm going to do:

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When I'm going to do it:

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How I'm going to do it:

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A blue-tinted background image featuring architectural blueprints, a pencil, and a tablet. The blueprints are spread out, with a pencil resting on them. A tablet is visible in the lower-left quadrant. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the blue tint dominating the color palette.

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

**-ARCHILOCHUS**