THEME
SOEP: Sales and Service
ELODER'S PAGE

Sales and Service: Generic

Everyone is selling something. The person selling is selling a product. The service person is selling their knowledge and skill. The teacher is often selling a product. The administration is selling a school; the philosopher, a theory; the preacher, an ideology; the politician, a legislative concern; and the president, a country. Everyone sells!

The skills learned related to selling can readily be likened to learning logic. The frame of reference can serve one throughout a lifetime. The products to be sold are tremendously diverse in agribusiness as in other business areas. The skill, once obtained, can provide for a career; temporal employment; part-time, supplemental or moonlighting income.

Needed Skills

The sales and service occupation, with its accompanying SOEP, can provide students with abilities which they can utilize throughout their lifetime. The skills are readily transferrable and can be exceedingly valuable even though they may be learned with a specific product or service in mind. The person adept at sales can acquire the necessary product/service knowledge through study and earn a living with these skills.

The sales and service occupation provides skills in marketing, distributing, advertising, displaying, and recordkeeping which makes the student marketable. There are noble challenges to vocational agriculture since they certainly provide students with employability options.

Nomenclature

There seems to be some confusion and disparity regarding what the profession is to call to the training of the students in this area. Some call the options sales and service and some refer to it as agribusiness.

I prefer the nomenclature proposed by Lee (1979) in which he proposed that the umbrella is agribusiness encompassing production agriculture and agribusiness. Agribusiness is a segment of the agribusiness industry, an industry. Agribusiness is comprised of those areas which provide the services and supply needed by production agriculture and handles the products produced by production agriculture.

One option, taxonomical area, of agribusiness is sales and service. The sales and service area is generic in the sense that it cuts across many areas of plant and animal supplies provided to production agriculture and the products emanating from production agriculture. One can sell or provide a service in the areas related to horticulture, plant supplies/products, animal supplies/products, natural resources, small animal care, agricultural mechanics, etc. Sales and service are common components to each. Therefore, the area is termed generic.

Dealing with People

One area of sales and service is that of human relations. Teaching about human relations in the classroom provides some principles but not all of the practical experience necessary for mastery. Real life, firsthand experience is essential and effectively provided through SOEP programs, which also provide essential affective training. The student is learning how to deal with people has obtained a valuable skill. The SOEP program provides for not only the attitudinal component but an opportunity to exercise the psychomotor and cognitive as well.

Summary

While production agriculture constitutes less than three percent of the occupations in agribusiness, agribusiness provides in excess of twenty percent of the American workforce. Numerous technical areas in agriculture require expertise in sales and service. These can be taught in vocational agriculture and through the SOEP program. Simultaneously, the SOEP will provide the necessary contact for articulation between business and education so badly needed in vocational agriculture.

By LARRY E. MILLER, Editor
(Dr. Miller is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University.)

The Cover

Supervised occupational experiences in sales and service provide students with learning opportunities which they can utilize throughout their lifetime.
THEME

SOE: Sales and Service

Agriculture mechanics, sales and service, horticulture, forestry, production agriculture, natural resources...whatever the area of study implies, occupational experience in agriculture education is continuously being examined. Do the areas as dictated by the 1963 Vocational Education Amendments have a prominent place in contemporary agriculture education?

Consider the following facts:

- Rural population is increasing; however, rural farm and farmer numbers are decreasing.
- Youth unemployment continues to be a major national social problem.
- National, state and local administrative agencies are requiring more accountability in all programs.
- In some states, extended-day and extended summer employment for vocational agriculture teachers are victims of budget cutbacks.
- Citizens are demanding more excellence in education with increased emphasis in math, grammar and communications skills.

Can vocational agriculture change to meet the needs of contemporary America? If vocational agriculture is to meet its mission of training or retraining students for job entry levels in agriculture occupations, increased emphasis must be placed on alternatives to traditional production agriculture programs. Population movement has caused an almost overnight blossoming of suburbs, exurbs, and trailer parks on land that was recently in agriculture production. Vocational agriculture teachers commonly express concern for the role and future of the non-farm student in their program.

Sales and service provide a logical alternative to the traditional production agriculture program. The agribusiness industry offers many job opportunities for the non-production agriculture student. Essential to a good sales and service program is supervised occupational experience for all students. Like FFA, SOE is an integral part of a strong agriculture education program. SOE makes vocational agriculture vocational.

Teacher Responsibilities

The role of the teacher is essential in the establishment of maintenance of satisfactory SOE in sales and service. Vocational agriculture instructors are directly responsible for the following procedures:

- Select a SOE which will develop skills and abilities and satisfy student-employer needs.
- Plan how SOE will be carried out before it begins.
- Plan class instruction to assure a positive experience.

- evaluate the SOE and adjust plans to gain new and meaningful experiences and agribusiness competencies.
- Four articles unique to SOE: Sales and Service explore the following areas:
- securing and maintaining sales and service SOE in a rapidly urbanizing area.
- maintaining a positive relationship between administration and teacher as a key to successful SOE in sales and service programs.
- supervising a successful SOE program in post-secondary agriculture education.

Meeting Rural Needs Through Sales and Service

Vocational agriculture education programs in our high schools have constantly been changing in order to keep pace with the needs of the communities we serve. The present is no exception. If we as agriculture educators are to provide the training and skills that our students will need in obtaining jobs, we must first stop and examine what jobs will be in demand. I feel safe in stating that between 20-25 percent of the work force in the United States are employed in some field of agriculture. However, only 3-4 percent of those persons are actually farmers and all indications point to that percent decreasing in the future. This shift from production agriculture to other types of agricultural career opportunities should be reflected in the training our students receive.

One method of accomplishing this would be the development of sound sales and service programs in our curriculum. Granted, the basic principles and knowledge of production agriculture cannot be totally neglected. The first two years of the program should provide the production training, followed by two years of concentrated study in the diverse field of agribusiness. There are numerous high schools that have utilized the agribusiness option for several years. However, I believe that there are many other schools across the nation that would greatly benefit by the addition of this option to their existing programs.

Advantages of Sales and Service

The sales and service option provides training to meet current employment needs. From my experience as a teacher of sales and service, it also offers several other advantages:

1. Students are more motivated and interested in school because they can relate the classroom instruction to their on-the-job experiences.
2. Several students would have dropped out of school had it not been for the opportunity to enroll in the agribusiness option and work as well as going to school.
3. Many of the skills that the students learn while on-the-job could not have been taught at school.
4. The agribusiness option can assist the student in making a sound career choice.

By Barry Z. Arey

References


5. The employer has a direct input into the training of students and provides them with the means of meeting their future employment needs.
6. The agribusiness option is a very cost effective method for the school to provide training as well as improving relations between the school and the community.

Getting Started

Just as in the case of many other new or untired ideas, the hardest thing to do is getting started. I would like to suggest a few steps that can be used in starting an agribusiness option. First, an assessment of the needs of your school's community should be made to determine if this option would be of benefit. A survey of agricultural business and employment needs should be conducted. Discuss the program with employers, school officials, young farmer members, and students in order to obtain their opinions and advice.

If your findings are favorable, the second step is to secure official school board approval. This may well be the most critical step because many new programs have failed due to poor communication between the agriculture education department and school administration. In order to avoid this potential problem, you should be sure to meet with all necessary school officials. Normally this would include local guidance personnel, the school principal, the vocational director, and the division superintendent. Make sure that each of these individuals understand the sales and service option and try to secure the support of all concerned.

Once school approval has been granted, the third step

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Meeting Rural Needs
Through Sales and Service

(Continued from page 6)

Involves developing guidelines and policies to be followed. Some of the policies found useful in the sales and service training are:

1. Only juniors and seniors who have completed at least two years of agriculture education classes are eligible.
2. Students are allotted either two or three periods of release time from school for the on-the-job training.
3. All students are enrolled in a one period agriculture class with a minimum of 2½ credits awarded to successful completion of the program.
4. One period per day for the coordination and supervision of the on-the-job training is necessary.
5. A handbook outlining the specific responsibilities of the teacher, the student, the parents, and the employers was developed.
6. A curriculum guide was developed and necessary funds were secured in order to purchase needed teaching supplies and materials.

The fourth step is to secure the proper training stations. Although this is an on-going process, it is most essential at the start of a new program. All potential training stations should be located. Then the teacher should personally visit and discuss with the employer the purpose of the agriculture program. He has found that most employers are very receptive toward the agriculture program. They generally welcome the opportunity to provide training and skill development for students that relate directly to their business. It should be remembered that students need to gain experience in agriculture as many aspects of the business as possible and not used simply as "fill-in" labor. Stress that the primary purpose of the program is educational. Also discuss the employer's responsibilities and work out details concerning teacher visitation, student's work hours and salary, and a training plan. Again, the development of good work stations is one of the keys to a successful agriculture program and should be of continuous concern to the teacher.

A final step in starting the program is the selection of students. As previously stated, the basic eligibility requirements are for a student to be either a junior or senior and have completed at least two years of agricultural education. I personally interview each interested student prior to their enrollment in the class. We discuss their career objectives, reason for wanting to be in the program, and general attitudes toward work. I usually had past experience with these students but in some cases find it necessary to contact other teachers and guidance personnel in order to obtain background information on potential students. They type of student allowed in the program is very important to the continued success of the agricultural option.

Maintaining the Program

After you have managed to get the program started, it then becomes a matter of maintaining and constantly trying to improve it.

1. Keep the in-school instruction basic to the needs of all students.
2. Place a major emphasis on such areas as current agricultural career opportunities, techniques on obtaining a job, human relations skills, good work attitudes, and general business procedures.
3. Use resource persons, field trips, and student involvement on the-on-the-job situations as teaching methods in keeping the class relevant and interesting.
4. Continue to locate new training stations and improve existing ones.
5. Remain flexible. During times of poor economic conditions and high unemployment, it may be necessary to provide some on-the-job training at school. I have attempted to do this by forming a student cooperative. Students have gained experience in such business areas as management, Supervision, budgeting, salesmanship, advertising, and the actual production of agricultural products that could be made in the school.

Another current trend in our society is the increasing use of computers. If we can provide instruction in the use and operation of computers hopefully, we can increase the student's career opportunities in a highly competitive job market.

Effective occupational experience in sales and service keeps one abreast with changing technology.

Summary

I have related some of my experiences and ideas on the development of a sales and service program. Now, more than ever, students should have a vocational agriculture program to satisfy the necessity of our program. Since the publication of the President's commission on public education, A Nation at Risk, I have seen the signs of a dramatic shift toward academic courses at the expense of vocational offerings. Students are being required to take additional courses in math and science which will make it increasingly difficult to fit vocational agriculture into their schedules. One of our most powerful justifications for opposing this development is the continued use and broadening of the supervised occupational experience programs in all areas of agriculture.

THEME

Supervised Work Experience: A Must for Post Secondary Programs

In 1972, Western Kentucky University agreed to cooperate with the Kentucky Farm Power and Equipment Dealers Association in the establishment of a post secondary agricultural mechanics educational program for the development of parts and service department management personnel. The parties agreed that it would be impossible for the University to provide all of the experience the students would need. This started an educational partnership that has continued to grow for 12 years.

This partnership is a three phase educational program. The first phase consists of two semesters of classroom and laboratory instruction. In the University setting, on basic theoretical development. The students also take industrial courses in business management and communications. The second phase is a 10 week supervised work experience period in which the students work in a dealership. The students are required to work a minimum of 40 hours per week for a minimum total of 400 hours. During this period, the students receive 6 hours of credit from the University and at least minimum wages from the employer. For the third and final phase, the students return to the University for two more semesters of formal instruction in diesel engine repair, transmission and final drive repair, farm machinery management and repair, and additional business management courses. Upon successful completion of all three phases, the students will have earned a minimum of 69 semester hours of university credit and an associate degree.

SOEP — A Major Strength

The supervised work experience phase has proven to be one of the major strengths of the program. During this 10 week period, the students have the opportunity to apply some of the theory taught in the University as well as learn new skills. As it is impossible for institutions to expose the students to all segments of a changing agricultural industry, the students are generally involved with many areas with which they are not familiar. This requires logical thinking, transfer of principles, and the development of new skills. It is during this phase that some students first learn to appreciate the basic skills and principles taught in their institution.

University courses covering the management of parts and service departments must be somewhat theoretical and technical. While guest speakers and field trips to dealerships help to bring this component of the program into reality, none of these can fulfill the educational objectives as well as actual working experience in a parts or service department. Only as a student makes sales, writes sales tickets or enters the information into a computer system, records parts, stocks newly received parts, compiles markup, services, warranties, and other sales activities can the student truly experience the interrelationships of the separate functions to the total business operation.

Customer relationships and the importance of this in a business is another area that cannot be completely taught in a classroom or laboratory setting. Many of the students have farm backgrounds and thus have had experience with the immediate need for replacement parts for farm machinery. However, being placed on the other side of a parts counter and facing the dilemma of attempting to meet all customer's requests, yet maintaining a reasonable inventory, is a new and awakening experience for the students.

Securing Work Experience

Although faculty members are available to assist the students in obtaining work experience positions, they are encouraged to seek this employment on their own. This experience, in itself, is an educational activity. Prior to this period, several hours of seminar time are devoted to resume preparation, interviewing techniques and other job seeking activities.

In this program, the supervised work experience phase is (Continued on page 8)

JULY, 1984
Supervision During the 10 week supervisory work experience phase, each student is visited by a University faculty member at least three times. The first visit is scheduled for the first week of employment. This visit is used to complete all work agreement forms and to discuss the educational objectives of the program. A second visit is scheduled near the midpoint of the period. The final visit is normally near the end of the contract period. Although the faculty member normally works with both the student and the employer during each trip, extra time is scheduled with the employer during the final visit to discuss the grade the student will receive for the 10 week period.

Rewards This close working relationship between the agricultural equipment dealers and the University has proven to be beneficial to both parties. The University professors benefit by being able to see current problems as they exist in the industry, are able to pick up trends taking place, and, in general, maintain current awareness of the agricultural equipment industry. The contacts made through supervised work experience supervision, advisory committees, and other contacts have enabled faculty members to attend specialized schools and workshops conducted by machinery companies. The University has also benefited through numerous contributions and donations made to the program by the industry. This includes scholarships, funds, components, farm machinery for teaching aids, computers and computer software, microwave readers and microfilm files, and financial assistance in the development of new teaching facilities.

In return, the liaison system resulting from the relationships of the supervised work experience phase has enabled the University to assist the industry in several ways. First, the industry has ready contacts for seeking new employees. In addition, several in-service schools have been conducted for current and prospective employees of machinery dealerships. The combination of direct one-on-one dealership contacts and the advisory committee has provided an important avenue for the dealers to make valuable input into the curriculum of the program. Obsolescence is a problem to be faced by educators as well as by the agricultural industry.

Summary The supervised work experience built into the post secondary agricultural curriculum at Western Kentucky University has been essential to the success of the program. While initially developed to provide student experience, it has grown into a valuable resource for the University to provide, many other benefits have resulted. As University budgets of post secondary and higher education institutions continue to change, supervised work experience programs will continue to play an increasingly significant role in the education of the young men and women for the agricultural industry.

Business and Vocational Education . . . Marriage For The Future!

I am, indeed, pleased to be here this morning . . . to be among friends. We are discussing a big and important business . . . farming. This fact is often overlooked by others, even those in the business. Last night someone related to me that someone in our government in Washington had remarked that he couldn't see all the importance of farming because he could buy all the food he wanted at the supermarket. This is an example of the real-world business man has real problems with the understanding of logistics . . . sad.

This man . . . and many more like him . . . also doesn't understand that our farm exports go a long way toward our balance of trade. With diminishing exports in almost every other sector, our farm exports take on ever greater importance.

So much for a preface to our main topic . . . partnership between vocational training and business. I believe that this partnership is vital to both business and the vocational training function. The most intimate partner in this world is marriage. I therefore, want you to think with me in a moment about how business and vocational training and I will take on the role of a marriage counselor.

We all know that marriage partners repeat marriage vows and those important words in 'I do.' But, in a 'real world' situation each partner also makes another unspoken vow that goes something like this: 'Never will we be married, I am going to change certain things about him/her.' This seeming contradiction is the heart of conflict. But marriages were not made to resolve conflicts and provide a maximum of support of one partner to the other to give mutual benefits. It is my company's policy that all dealings with employees, dealers, customers, suppliers, and other organizations must be one of mutual benefit.

Obviously, I cannot hope to resolve all issues today, but I will make an honest and frank attempt at relating some thoughts on the ingredients for a successful marriage between business and vocational education. First of all, we have to acknowledge that the United States is the only industrial nation in the world that does not have a government mandated apprenticeship or vocational training requirement for skilled trades. Certainly, I am not clamoring for more government control. All I am trying to say is that our voluntary system has the ingredients for duplication of support, and problems with proper image. Peter Drucker has properly observed that "We educate too many, and train too few." Yet, the need for trained individuals is enormous.

Let's then analyze the mission and function of vocational training. First of all, we must educate and train our members of our communities to acquire skills that are desired by business and industry. These skills must be at a level that enables the graduating student to get and hold a job. Second, we must prepare for those who wish to enter the vocational training . . . to train and retain members of the nation's workforce that no longer have the skills in a rapidly changing job market.

This leads me to the age-old discussion of the difference between education and training. Here are my definitions: Training is the development of certain skills that require a great deal of students aged 10-16 revealed that Japanese children rated no. 1 and U.S.

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Business and Vocational Education ... Marriage For The Future!

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children rated no. 171. That should give us food for thought, but not only food for thought, a national will to change and improve.

Now, let us look at the expectations that business has. Obviously, marriage partners are the most important part of each other. The ideal service you can provide to business and industry is that you bring them into the life and climate of the institution, that they can fill a vacancy in business without additional training. I am enough of a realist to know this is not always possible, but your graduates must be sufficiently schooled to become productive members of the skilled workforce in a relatively short time.

As an example, let us again address the agricultural machinery technician. It is just not enough to teach him/her to be punctual, tidy, cooperative, organized, well-groomed, etc. and, there are two very important elements in this. First, the student must be treated with courtesy and respect, and that work must be completed in a reasonable time as possible. In short, business wants an employee who can, and will, carry out the work with a high level of personal (character) level. I believe that most managers would agree with me that the personal conviction and experience that has prompted me to say on numerous occasions: "Give me someone who has that character, and I can teach him/her the rest." Also, a person with good character traits will be a benefit for good wages and future promotions.

I believe Will Rogers knew something about providing just what was expected when he said, "You never get a second chance at making a first good impression." It is important that your students clearly understand this.

Now, let's turn the tables for a moment. Let's find out what the expectations of business and industry are. I believe business should be involved in vocational training on a regional, state, and federal level. We need a return to guidance on curriculum. Business should offer training opportunities for vocational instructors. This year I have advised all ten regional Deere training centers to provide at least one week of training for vocational instructors each year. Already, there has been an excellent response to this approach.

Business should also have an op- en door to allow vocational classes to visit business and get a first-hand view of what is happening in business. Business is all about business and should provide speakers or workshop leaders to work with vocational students toward common goals and mutual benefits.

Business should also concern itself with the high cost of training equipment and provide expensive training aids at reduced prices or on a lease/ basis. Deere has made extensive efforts to provide reasonably priced training materials and is also making numerous donations of machinery to vocational education. We will further review our policies to provide even greater assistance.

Business, through its local dealers or distributors, must provide opportunities for work-study programs for vocational students. Business also has the responsibility to provide honest feedback on the performance of former students. I believe that the vocational teacher needs good tips that may lead to changes and improvements in the curriculum.

Business must also make every reasonable effort to support vocational training through business associations and their actions and resolutions. Deere, for example, has been in communication with the good officers of the regional executive vice president, Mr. Boyd Barlett, the following resolution was passed in-business, the Farm Indus- trial Equipment Institute):

"Be it resolved that the Farm & Industrial Equipment Institute strongly supports education and training of voca- tional students at community colleges and vocational-technical schools in the general field of agricultural mechanization, The graduates of these programs often have the valuable employment opportunities and are essential to maintaining the productivity of agriculture and the agricultural industry. Further, we strongly endorse and encourage representatives from our member companies to continue to support the boards of the schools, help recruit people to attend, provide or assist in obtaining training materials, support public endorsement of the agricultural mechanization programs, and to pro- mote funding (private and govern- ment) of these schools, as a means of providing technically qualified man- power. These opportunities are surely afforded by our industries."

Resolutions in themselves are not ac- tion. We should also have an open door to allow vocational classes to visit business and get a first-hand view of what is happening in business. Business is all about business and should provide speakers or workshop leaders to work with vocational students toward common goals and mutual benefits.

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For a while we have called this age "The Space Age." That may well be true. But, there has been a small, but definite, minimal effect on the average American. More important are the ef- fects of the "computer age." In the computer age, changes come on with lightning speed and little warning.

Let us review the growth of the printing trade. Since Johann Gutenberg in- vented printing about 400 years ago, there has not been a real break in printing technology. To be sure, machines have taken over where human labor was once required, but typesetting was by and large a hand operation, and cut-and-paste methods of manuscript preparation were the rule. Within a few short years, this business has been completely revolution- ized. And Deere & Company we saw this technology develop, and we got in on the ground floor by investing over $2 million in highly sophisticated print make-ready equipment. In less than three years, our new press is running at 1,500 copies a day, and we are keeping it supplied with new textbooks, and the personal involvement, is required to provide proper balance. The same is true today, with the new era of student and teacher evaluation. We can all agree on evaluating, but at the same time, we must know how to do it. The airlines are using control data's "Plato" system to keep flight crews up-to-date, and to test their knowledge in a manner that is integrated into the same direction. Deere is actively investigating where we can be of assistance in applying electronically to classroom instruction within the next year, providing for farm equipment business improvement.

I believe that the computer is not for everything and everybody. We must not become computers and office machines. Much evaluation and management is needed to effectively employ a computer in a job that is trap like we did with modern math.

I am sure you are aware that computers can pose a real threat to mankind in general. However, the education we have had, particularly those who find change a dif- ficult process, I have even felt in- timidated by the computer. In fact, when we implemented our computerized public service system, we all said that this was the first time when I managed a group of people and I did not know what I was all about. Maybe that is a bit overstated, but there is a lot of truth in it at the same time. We know that businesses go broke when they fail to embrace systems that improve their efficiency. Likewise, we go broke, lose support and funding, if we continue to use archaic methods of doing things. We are in the process of graduating for today's job environment. I believe that good computer programs will allow students to learn better and faster by interacting in computer exer- cises. The computer may even be con- sidered an aide to instruction, friendly for the marginal or shy stu- dent. Fascination may lead to real motivation.

The computer will also free the teacher from many routine chores, and allow the students to give more attention to students who need a little extra help. In John Nashitt's book, "Management of Instruction," he says: "High Tech — High Touch." The idea is that high technology has a tendency to go with human interaction, so we have to provide an effective "touch," the personal involvement, is required to provide proper balance. The same is true today, with the new era of student and teacher evaluation. We can all agree on evaluating, but at the same time, we must know how to do it. The airlines are using control data's "Plato" system to keep flight crews up-to-date, and to test their knowledge in a manner that is integrated into the same direction. Deere is actively investigating where we can be of assistance in applying electronically to classroom instruction within the next year, providing for farm equipment business improvement.

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Also, keep in mind that over 80 percent of all operators of small businesses do not have a college education, but all of these people are creating access to computer education. The requirement for well- 

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Business and Vocational Education . . . Marriage For The Future!

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Let me leave with you one more challenge. We have to work toward a degree of standardization in our training. I believe it would be a real advantage if students from Delaware to California and all places in between, would be trained to a similar standard of proficiency. I strongly believe that it would serve our mutual cause.

Well, we are in this together, together we can rise or fall, live or die, succeed or fail; and we never want to fail. The secret to our mutual success may well lie in the way we feel about each other. We need to feel comfortable with each other. So, let's stay in touch.

On my way to this meeting, I saw a bumper sticker on a car in the Disneyland parking lot with the well-known question: “Have you hugged your kid today?” It may seem trite, but I'll ask you anyway “Educators, have you hugged your businessesperson today?” “Businesspeople, have you hugged your vocational educator today?”

I firmly believe we can succeed in our efforts if we are in touch with each other every day; people talking to people. That's what it is all about. That leads to a mutual benefit. Let's make ours a successful and long-lasting marriage.

THEME
Organizing Placement Programs

Any baseball player will tell you, you can not score a run unless you have touched all the bases. So it is with the placement program in the local vocational agriculture department. If all the planning and coordination bases are not tagged in implementing the placement experience, the chance for student success can be greatly reduced.

Approximately 23 percent of the nation's workforce is actively employed in the agricultural industry, but less than three percent are in farming and ranching, the other 20 percent are employed in the various supply, service, and processing occupations that support production agriculture. It is this area that will continue to expand as our actual on-farm population continues to decline. Many of our vocational agriculture programs have been (and still are) production-oriented, so less thought and preparation has gone into effective planning for placement in agribusiness programs. However, when one looks at the opportunities available in production agriculture and those available in agribusiness, it is obvious more attention needs to be given to placement in agriculture and agribusiness as a viable alternative for a supervised occupational experience program. A placement program is also an excellent way to show students not raised on a farm or ranch how agriculture and agribusiness can be relevant to them.

The bases that should be covered to maximize the chances for a successful placement experience are described below and in the accompanying photographs. The key people involved are the student, the employer, the parents, and the vocational agriculture instructor.

The Process

The first step is always the establishment of a strong classroom program of vocational agriculture. There is no substitute for an enthusiastic and the wholehearted instructor. Through the instructor has to teach more than cows and sows, a solid background in production agriculture is needed by students interested in agriculture so they can speak the farmer's language. Curriculum emphasis on agribusiness management, and skills for getting employment should be included to make students aware of opportunities available, as well as how to prepare for entry into employment. Several curriculum guides on employment in agribusiness are available to assist the instructor.

A placement program solely for the purpose of earning money is certainly not a supervised occupational experience program. Career counseling is essential. The instructor needs to be aware of the occupational goals of the student if proper classroom content is to be taught and proper placement opportunities are to be made available. This can be accomplished through interviews with the student and parents and through interest surveys and aptitude tests administered by the school counselor. By addressing career interests and goals, the placement experience becomes individualized and truly vocational to that student.

Many times, the businesses utilized as training stations are those that have supported the vocational agriculture program in the past along with the instructor's initial contact with the manager/owner usually secures the site as a possible placement center. The instructor will generally describe what the vocational agriculture placement program is about and explain the role of the business as an educational arm of the school system. The instructor will also describe the role of the employer in the hiring/interviewing process as well as the actual training responsibilities. The instructor must be sure the employer understands the legal implications and the supervisory function of the manager of the business and the vocational agriculture instructor.

An understanding must be reached that the student is there to learn and a prescribed plan of gaining quality employment experience must be followed. The student will not be there to simply push a broom for an entire semester. Naturally, the employer needs a positive, cooperative, and professional student on-the-job.

The Training Plan

The student must assume the responsibility of preparing for the job interview and securing the position. After the placement has been arranged, the formulation of a training plan is the new employee's visits to the training center in cooperation with the instructor and the employer, should formulate a realistic training plan. The student needs to realize that the employer will probably be much less sympathetic to the student's extra-curricular activities than if the student worked at home.

The plan should be comprehensive in scope and requirements both during and after the training experience. The employer should evaluate the entire placement experience and provide the instructor suggestions for improving the program. The instructor and the employer should evaluate the program and performance of the student during the entire experience, not only to identify additional career related experiences that would be beneficial to the student, but also for the assignment of a grade and for subsequent letters of recommendation for employment. The student will evaluate the placement center and offer a recommendation regarding the use of that placement center in the future.

Another important component of any placement program is the inclusion of leadership and achievement incentives through the FFA. Several opportunities exist for awards and recognition on the local, state and national level. Students should be encouraged to participate in the variety of FFA Proficiency Awards that are specifically designed for agribusiness SOE programs. They should also be encouraged to apply for advanced degree programs such as State Agribusiness Degrees and Agronomy Degrees and participate in leadership contests that might be beneficial in meeting their career preparation goals.

Successful placement experience depends on the completion of each of the component steps. To effectively implement such a program of experiences requires full cooperation and understanding of all parties involved. If one party or one step in the process is left out, the placement experience loses some of its chances for success. Vocational agriculture programs and SOE programs can gain dividends through the placement SOEP if these important considerations are followed.
Agribusiness Placement Students—What Are They Like?

By DAVID A. PILGRIM AND DAVID L. WILLIAMS

This article discusses the characteristics of students participating in agribusiness placement programs. The authors present data on the types of agriculture students participate in and the agricultural experiences they gain from these programs. They also examine the impact of these experiences on students' future careers.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of students who participated in different types of SOE programs. These programs include Agriculture Placement, AgroBiz, and AgroTech. The table also includes data on the percentage of students who obtained their degree or certification in agribusiness or related fields.

The authors suggest that these programs can provide valuable experiences for students interested in agribusiness careers. They recommend that more schools offer these programs to help students prepare for their future careers.

The study concludes that these programs are effective in providing students with practical experience in agribusiness and can help them make informed career decisions. The authors encourage more schools to offer these programs to prepare students for successful careers in agribusiness.

The article concludes with recommendations for future research, including the need for more research on the long-term effects of these programs on students' careers.

(Continued on page 16)
Agribusiness Placement Students — What Are They Like?

5. Almost two-thirds of the participants located the training stations for agribusiness placement SOE programs without the assistance of a vocational agriculture teacher. The majority of them were placed with only one employer. The average number of months for training with all employers was seventeen. Information of this nature suggests that vocational agriculture teachers need to take more active roles in guiding students in achieving variety of experiences and perspectives in their occupational areas over sufficient periods of time.

6. Virtually without exception, students participating in agribusiness placement SOE programs were members of the majority. In other words, nearly 90 percent had at least one owner farmer, indicating that the SOE program is not serving those students with the opportunity for learning and recognition.

7. Almost one-fourth of the students placed on eventual employment within the area of agricultural mechanics. This figure is fairly consistent with the number of students participating in agribusiness placement SOE programs related to this area. Unfortunately, no evidence for this type of balance was present in other agriculture areas. A closer relationship between the type of agriculture placement SOE and occupational plans is needed in providing optimum occupational preparation for all students.

8. Seventy-eight percent of the new participants planned to enter an agricultural occupation. Six out of every ten students reported that they would seek additional formal education immediately after high school. Therefore, student placement should identify areas in agriculture placement SOE programs that would provide even greater numbers of students the opportunity for learning and recognition.

SOE is an integral part of vocational agriculture education, and it should be better understood as a process. Students participate in the agricultural occupations of tomorrow. Up-to-date approaches in making SOE reflect the nature of the present and future agricultural industry must be utilized. A limited number of agribusiness placement SOE are only one source of information in establishing effective agricultural placement SOE programs.

A Discrepancy Between Goals and Opportunities

Eleven percent of 1977 Utah Vocational agriculture graduates found full-time employment in production agriculture. Yet, 50 percent of the enrollees in 1982 had production experiences in the field. Realistic views of job opportunities could help make experience programs more useful to students.

SOE's Prepare Students for Work

Many of the students who most need vocational training should possess a competitive edge to obtain agricultural employment. Production agriculture cannot offer employment opportunities to all. Agribusiness opportunities are more numerous, but they offer more prior experience. Participation in supervised occupational experience programs can then be a help in obtaining employment. An SOE in work directly related to the student's career and occupational choice is much more valuable than any project in and of itself.

Career Choice

Of the 20 percent of Utah students who did not have a project, 58.3 percent indicated that they had no agricultural vocational goal. This is contrary to a Vocational State Board Program Standard in Utah. Teacher enforcement of mandatory SOE's would eliminate students not preparing for an agricultural job. This would reduce teacher load levels and enable them to give more help to sincerely interested students. The present compromise results in more dollars for the local district but erodes the unique contribution that experience programs can make in educating students for work.

Figure 2

By Gilbert A. Long

Experience programs are powerful teachers. Jensen (1979) found Utah teachers were not emphasizing the content that farmers said was essential. Utah senior vocational agriculture students who had supervised farming projects, skilled agricultural teams, and other recognition scored well on multiple choice questions focused on content that the farmers had rated highly. Farm background and college preparation were not sufficient in some instances against teacher obfuscation in spite of an active in-service program. Students with supervised experience programs appeared to be significantly more practical knowledge than those without projects. How many vocational agricultural students enjoy this advantage?

T he agricultural education magazine

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SOEP — Making A Good Tool Better  
(Continued from page 17)  

small communities whose parents are farmers, and who plan to go to college, have projects above a 90 percent level in Utah.

Less experienced students from cities, whose parents are not in agriculture, have projects at a 60 percent level. Students from non-farm family backgrounds need laboratory experiences that are real and authentic. A properly conducted program can enable students to make knowledgeable of that time differential.

A realistic teacher role together with sufficient laboratory space for entrepreneurial, group, and simulated experiences is essential if we are to provide the much more vocational or actual experiences to all of the students who need them. Providing a quality experience for the typically heterogeneous group of students currently enrolled in secondary vocational agriculture programs is a challenge requiring teacher competence, student work habits, and innovative use of laboratory, simulation, and work stations.

References
Horton, Chuck B. Assessing the Performance Capabilities of Senior Vocational Agriculture Students. Master's thesis, Utah State University, 1980, pp. 64.

They are motivated to see their project continues as they save approximately $1400/yr from their living cost. But students also find out that it is often cold at 6:00 a.m., feeding animals during our New England winters, or that they need to make a personal sacrifice to save or two for the other 19 students. The project is not on a burden on the educational programs of the school but a complementary and economical learning experience for twenty select students.

The human development and personal skills which are developed may be the greatest benefit of the program. The cooperative living and learning concept of Highland House has many benefits as we look for increased student proficiency and increasing budgetary constraints.

A Cooperative Learning Experience

By Ralph Orell
(Professor, Department of Science, Teachers College, Applied Sciences, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire 03824)

Education of young people is a challenging and often difficult job. Employability requires a proficiency of marketable skills, essential work habits and associated human development. Students today are faced with numerous personal, social, and physical limitations as a precursor to their academic development. Educators are faced with greater obstacles such as limited financial resources and numerous time constraints. Innovative, cost-efficient ideas are needed to meet the educational needs of our future students.

Presently, 20 students (male and female) of the Thompson School of Applied Science cooperatively manage and operate a working farm with the income from the farm being used to decrease their living expenses. Students obtain practical experience, self-confidence and maturity, while obtaining an education. The long-range goal is to provide a living and learning experience for the physically disadvantaged students, where they will receive a major portion of their college expenses.

Students are able to apply classroom information to real life management problems and develop price skills. The Thompson School of Applied Science is a two-year technical school offering Associate in Applied Science degrees in the areas of forestry, animal science, horticultural technology, food service management, business management, and civil technology. The Highland House Farm consists of 100 acres of which half are tillable and the remaining woodlands. The farm is broken into various enterprises with the students from each curricula in charge of daily and long-term management.

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The enterprises consist of: cordwood which is cut and sold, horses which are boarded, livestock for student consumption, vegetables for sale and personal consumption, an orchard, hay for sale, maple syrup, Christmas trees, and several types of small fruits. The varying expertise of the students complements the production components of the farm. The students live on the farm, prepare their own meals, do their own cleaning and as much maintenance and upkeep as possible. They shop for the best buys, can and freeze vegetables, and slaughter the animals from the farm. Energy conservation is a primary concern with wood heat, a windmill for supplementary electricity, and energy conserving water-saving devices. Soil/land conservation is practiced to its utmost in order to retain long-term financial benefits for the land.

Management

There is no outside funding for the project or budgeted income from the school. The farm is financially self-sufficient with the income from the farm being plowed back into farm improvement. The project is not a showplace but a realistic working farm with financial pinch just like real life. Second-hand equipment is purchased and repaired rather than buying new. The best buy is always a goal, proper care and maintenance creates maximum return on our purchases.

The farm enterprises are directed by the seniors of the farm who in turn provide organization and basic instruction to the freshmen. Farm problems are discussed with a farm supervisor who coordinates all farm activities and members of the school faculty. This organization provides basic instruction plus specific technical problems as they arise.

Weekly meetings are held by the students to discuss the needs of the farm and their living unit. It is an opportunity to find out what others are doing and their problems. Decisions need to be made, students must prioritize their efforts on the farm, their personal desires, and compromises made. The needs and desires of fellow students, customers, and the general public are voiced with decisions made by a majority.

Benefits

There are numerous benefits to this experiential program. The most noticeable are the managerial and personal skills developed by the students. They obtain several hundreds of hours of practical hands-on experience and develop job related skills. Irreplaceable managerial experience is obtained in a very realistic atmosphere.

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JULY, 1984
Using Microcomputers for SOEP Records

By William G. Camp and Betty Heath

(Editors’ Note: Dr. Camp is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education and Dr. Heath is an Assistant Professor of Marketing Education in the Division of Vocational and Technical Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.)

The advent of the computer age after World War II, big business found it possible to maintain and retrieve information that was otherwise expensive and difficult. The computer age came to agriculture at the same time, but only to the largest farms and to researchers at research universities. Later, with the development of remote terminals with telecommunications capabilities, more and more farmers and many agricultural extension agents gained telephone access to those big mainframe computers and the advantages that those machines could provide in decision making. Only since 1975 has the development of relatively inexpensive microcomputers and applicable soft-

ware brought similar advantages to the small farmer and the agriculture teacher as well. The microcomputers and their respective software have enabled these individuals to keep records with a self-contained unit which eliminates the expense of tying into a mainframe. Future agribusiness persons could learn to use these microcomputers and programs through their entrepreneurship projects. Let us take a look at records that agriculture students could maintain on their SOE programs.

Types of Records

There are basically two types of records that could be used for SOE programs: spreadsheet records and data management information. Each requires a different type of software and each serves a different purpose. For each type there are a number of both specialized and general purpose programs available. The following discussion will give you a brief overview of these two types of software.

Spreadsheets

When we think of SOEP recordkeeping, we typically think of spreadsheet records. This type of data consists of rows and columns of information. For instance, an expense record or income record represents spreadsheet data. Essentially all accounting and most financial records are maintained on spreadsheets as are most enterprise records.

General purpose spreadsheets.

General purpose spreadsheets are well suited to the task of maintaining and analyzing such records. The industry leaders in this area are: VisiCalc, MagicCalc, Lotus 1-2-3, Multiplan, and SuperCalc II. These programs range in price from about $150 to $400. Spreadsheet programs of this type consist of a grid of rows and columns that can be set up to handle basically any purposes the user chooses. All of them require you to learn a set of commands and to master a series of operations before you can expect the program to be working effectively. Once you have set up the formulas for the rows and columns, it is simply a matter of plug-
ging in the data just as you would for a regular recordkeeping program.

The major advantage of the electronic spreadsheet over the paper record book is that all subtotals and totals are calculated automatically by the program. In addition, if you decide to change an entry, all of the subtotals and totals are automatically recalculated. The major disadvantage is that the user must spend time to become proficient in the use of the spreadsheet.

On the average, it will take you approximately four hours to learn the basics of an electronic spreadsheet and approximately 15 hours to completely master the program. Truly a small investment of time for many saved hours of labor not only for yourself, but also for others. Whenever a user sets up a spreadsheet to serve his or her specific purpose, the resulting spreadsheet can be used as a template for other persons with the same specific purpose. As an example, an SOEP recordbook can be set up for one student’s records and the same template can then be duplicated over and over for use by other students who have the same recordbook. Each student simply enters his or her enter-

prises and the data in the appropriate blank columns of the template and the pro-
gram does the rest.

This leads to another simplification. A school that has emerged in the development of specialized templates for literally thousands of different uses. Essentially, developing and field testing of several of the state SOEP recordbooks. This means that once the teacher has a microcom-
puter and a spreadsheet software package such as VisiCalc, there may already be a set of templates available for his or her students’ recordbooks. If not, there almost certainly will be in the next year or two. An enterprising teacher could even arrange with other teachers to cooperatively develop templates to use in group trading.

Special purpose spreadsheets.

Currently, the software industry is the fastest growing business in the coun-
try. There are over 40,000 commercial software packages available now and hundreds more are being produced each month. Specialized accounting programs are plentiful for all major brands of microcomputers and range in price from less that $30 to as much as several thousand dollars.

The principles of accounting are the same in agriculture as they are in any business and most of these general ac-
counting systems would be quite ade-
quate for farm recordkeeping. Their shortcomings are similar to those of general purpose spreadsheets. To be useful in SOEP recordkeeping, they must be adapted to the individual pro-
ject setup and that could be very time-
consuming. Beyond that, these types of programs are really little more than very detailed templates with the spreadsheet program built in. More-
over they are generally more expensive than specialized spreadsheets. But, in all probability, the programmers make it very difficult if not impossible to duplicate them for use on multiple students’ records. In fact, they are almost always protected by copyright laws from duplication.

Thus, the use of most special pur-
purpose accounting software for maintain-
ing student recordkeeping is simply too costly for most vocational agriculture departments. The same shortcomings are true for specialized agricultural accounting packages. This is unfortu-
nate, since these are the types of pro-
gram that future agribusiness persons need to learn to use in order to suc-
cessfully manage their business. Perhaps the use of generic spreadsheet and templates can serve as a suitable compromise. The student learns how to use the microcomputer as a manage-
ment tool and the cost is maintained at an acceptable level.

Data Management

A secondary type of recordkeeping that can be important is what is known as data management. This type of program allows the user to maintain and retrieve information that would ordinarily be kept on any sort of form and in a file. An example is breeding information on each cow in a dairy herd. Another example would be maintenance records on farm, greenhouse, or shop equipment.

As in spreadsheet programs, there are general purpose (generic) data management packages and special pur-
purpose packages. Let’s look at both types of software.

General purpose data management.

In terms of general purpose data management software, some of the indus-
try leaders are: RPS, File, PSS/REPORT, Lotus 1-2-3, dBase II, and VisiCalc. They range in cost from about $125 to $400. Software packages such as these allow the user to create almost any sort of form that could be developed on paper. The blank form is then saved on a diskette and the blank is us-
ed as many times as needed.

Imagine a 3" x 5" card file on your students’ SOE programs. Each card (Continued on page 22)
Using Microcomputers for SOEP Records

(Continued from page 22)

could list one student's enterprises by scope and year. If you want to identify all the students who have home gardens as projects, you sort through the cards and make a list. A data management program can automatically locate and list all of your cards and do all of your sorting, selecting, printing and summarizing for you. The same capabilities could be very useful for many types of student SOEP management records.

Learning a typical data management program is relatively simple. For instance, if PFS: FILE can usually be completely mastered in less than two hours. It can then be used for as many different forms as you and your students can imagine.

Specialized data management. There are, of course, any number of specialized data management systems available for agriculture. Dairy herd management software, feeder hog data programs, and inventory systems are just a few of the many systems on the market. In reality, most systems are little more than a collection of very detailed predesigned forms with a built in data management program. One advantage of these special purpose data management systems is that the user does not have to learn how to create his or her own forms. A second advantage is that less time is needed to customize existing forms than to develop new ones.

There are several advantages that general purpose data management packages have over the specialized ones. First, the general purpose package can be used for more than a single purpose. This gives the user great flexibility. Second, they are generally less expensive. General purpose software has a bigger market and can be produced at a lower per unit cost. Third, special purpose data management software is usually not designed for use by a single farm or other business. This means that each student might need his or her own set; an obviously expensive proposition.

With general purpose packages, multiple users are intended, so there is no problem.

Recommendations

From the foregoing discussion, two recommendations emerge. The first is that vocational agriculture students should be taught how to maintain their SOEP records on microcomputers. Specifically, a collection of very detailed predesigned forms with a built in data management program. One advantage of these special purpose data management systems is that the user does not have to learn how to create his or her own forms. A second advantage is that less time is needed to customize existing forms than to develop new ones.

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Conclusion

Computers can be a great help to us in our homes, schools, and jobs. Agriculture teachers should be especially concerned with two of these roles. First, the role of the teacher. There is no better way to fulfill that goal than to provide practical hands on experience for our students through their Supervised Occupational Experience Programs. Second, the role of the student. Each chapter is very challenging, many requiring interpretation of data and application of principles. No answers are provided.

Overall, the book is comprehensive without addressing the subject crop by crop. Especially strong is the coverage of forage crops and grazing systems. The appendixes are extensive, and contain much useful information for instructors. Unfortunately, little information on weed control is included. The text addresses energy in terms of input/output.

Understanding Crop Production is a good reference book for vocational agriculture teachers and an excellent text for college level crop production classes.

Artis Stover
Michigan State University
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FROM ROW: Dr. Rick Foster - University of Nebraska, Holly Stickel - Ohio State University, Sharon Alden - Tarleton State University, Keith Wentelette - Kansas State University, Joe Tal - Oklahoma State University, David Trower - Penn State University, Mark Hallock - University of Arkansas.

SECOND ROW: Ted Ackley - Program Specialist, National ITA Center, Les Tilly - Cameron University, Billy Manning - Mississippi State University, Kevin Dye - Stephen F. Austin State University, Dr. James White - Oklahoma State University, Scott Langston - Texas A&M University, Tracy Dunkley - Colorado State University, Lyman Davis - New Mexico State University and East Texas State University.

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National Collegiate Workshop Held

The workshop held in July at the National Collegiate Workshop.

THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE


This very factual and well-documented book contains historical and recent events that have adversely affected the family farm. An FFA speech based upon this reference would be very different from the usual ones. The author documents how nearly every piece of farm legislation supposed has been for the purpose of helping the family farm, yet the legislation has been mostly harmful to the farm. The author is not a Capitalist. Neither is he extreme environmentalist. He wants the smaller and medium size farms to survive and be profitable without exploitiation by agriculture. Exploitation of farm workers on large farms is also a topic of the book.

Agrarian democracy and social justice is the theme of the book. Chapter titles are:

The Myth of the Family Farm
What is a Family Farm?
Consequences of Federal Land and Water Policies
The Market Economy and Agriculture
Federal Subsidies to Agriculture
Rural Consequences of Agriculture
Agricultural Democracy or Agrarian Capitalism

The book would best be used as a reference in departmental libraries.

Martin B. McMillan
Teacher Education Virginia Tech

JULY, 1984

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Stories in Pictures

Animal Supplies

Plant Supplies

Agricultural Mechanics

Human Relations

TECHNICAL SKILLS + HUMAN RELATIONS + BUSINESS PROCEDURES = LEARNING

(Photographs courtesy of Warren Central High School, Vocational Agriculture Department, Bowling Green, Kentucky.)