

eBook

HOW TO MARKET YOUR AG RETAIL BUSINESS TO FARMERS

GROWERS

www.growers.ag | sales@growers.ag | 984.500.3797

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AT GROWERS, we believe agronomy sales representatives are the heroes in today's crazy agronomy supply chain. We are here to champion your role as the one-on-one, trusted farmer-advisors amid an industry tidal wave pushing toward e-commerce and transaction-based selling.

We know you want to sell more, earn more, and advance in your organization. This e-book offers insights to help you identify what makes you stand out from the competition, build career-long relationships with farmers, and use technology to solidify your approach.

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01 | EMPHASIZE YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

As an ag retailer, you are an essential piece in the world of agricultural business. Farmers come to you because they trust your judgment and knowledge of seed, chemical, and in-season insights that will make their farms successful. You are the supplier, project manager, advisor, and more to these farmers, which can be a lot on top of meeting sales goals.

To make sure that you are the “go-to” ag retailer, you need to market yourself. This is how you grow your sales (and your commissions) while building a client list that will help you advance your career. The goal is for the farmers who need the advice and the products to come to you, not the competition.

WHAT IS A VALUE PROPOSITION?

Your value proposition will be what distinguishes you from your competitors – the reason why you are the ag retailer that farmers should seek out for advice. The goal is to establish what you can offer your customers that others cannot. This is not about the products and services you offer; it is about the way you do business.



Keys to Selling Your Solution:

- Identify key quantified benefits that you offer a grower to address their critical farm issues
- Give growers the projected total investment of providing the benefits



Base Your Value Prop On:

- **The knowledge of the specific benefits that other customers have already achieved**
 - *Ex. All of my customers have achieved their yield growth goal in the last five years, or my farmers can complete their pre-season ordering in three simple steps versus a lot of back and forth.*
- **The experiences you have had with a customer who has a comparable situation**
 - *Ex. I know how to work with farmers who are changing plans right up until planting, and we make sure all of their inventory and application needs get them into the field on time.*
- **The estimation of the value provided to the customer you are referencing**
 - *Ex. With my advice, we can help you save valuable time, in some cases hours worth of meetings, by centralizing all of your input recommendations into one step, or my connections within the industry will help other avenues of your business like grain marketing and operations and logistics.*

WHY HAVE A VALUE PROPOSITION

The world of agronomy and grain marketing is moving to an omnichannel approach. A product supplier wants to allow farmers to purchase their products any way they prefer. In-person. Online. In the store. Or a combination of all three.

The product categories you're trying to sell are likely available online and are probably being sold by at least two retail competitors in your region. How do you get the right kind of attention when the products and services you're selling are being sold by everyone else?

This is why you, as an individual sales representative, need to identify your value proposition. This can be in addition to the value proposition (competitive advantage) of your organization as a whole.

Marketing is not always black and white for ag retailers (or any business owner). While some farmers come seeking guidance willingly, others are not quite as forthcoming. You have to find a way to bridge gaps that may exist to craft the winning solutions. Your value proposition is how you will discover and define solutions to increase customer value.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION CONSIST OF?

We already acknowledged that the value proposition comes from identifying what you can offer in service and performance that others cannot. There will be multiple ways to address these gaps, some of which the competition will be taking advantage of – your value has to outshine theirs.

If a grower comes to you with a problem, they want you to have the answer they need. Better yet, proactively reaching out to help them avoid a problem in the first place is ideal.

In a perfect agribusiness situation, you would have every solution to every problem these farmers face, but this isn't the reality. Here is where you gain insight into how your marketing approach can draw in farmers who may be experiencing the same problem.

LEVERAGING YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Ag retailers have a unique relationship with farmers. To leverage your value proposition, you want to create enough interest that motivates your customer to discuss their problems with their farms. If they don't discuss the issues they have, you can't develop the solutions.

Value is based on customer perception. The happier the customer, the more they value your offering, and the higher your market value. If your value is low, as perceived by your customers, you will find it very difficult to market yourself to the farmers who may benefit from your services and solutions.

You know better than anyone that your farmers are creating and collecting more data than ever before. However, if that data does not help a farmer make a better operational, financial, or input-placement decision in the next growing season, it does not offer value.

As an ag retailer, you are the connection points between the data, the product/service, and the farmer's goals. Your value proposition is how you connect every aspect and easily create an easy-to-follow (and implement) plan for the following year.

02 | BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BY PROVIDING VALUE TO DATA

There is something to be said about a healthy relationship between a business and a customer. Identifying your value proposition and building relationships with farmers does not mean you cannot push back or offer differing opinions. Your role is to do all you can to help your customer meet their goals.

That starts by identifying their goal. Earning the right to use farmers' data to help their operation is a win for you. Once you have access to their records or historical management practices, you can start the process for earning their loyalty year after year (or against other sales reps)!

THE VALUE DATA HAS ON FARMING OPERATIONS

The farmers that seek out your help and services likely do not know the value of the data their farms produce. Technology has come a long way in the farming industry. The technology available is making it easier to track data and patterns. Farmers can also gain a transparent view of the finances that factor into the whole farming operation.

In most cases, ag retailers have the most knowledge in analyzing the data for a given farming operation. Data can help ag retailers determine the products and specific changes needed within an operation – data-driven success rates! Technology is what helps bring the data to the table so that it can then be analyzed.

Adding Value to Farm Data

Not every farmer knows that they can use their data to help with protecting their assets, growing their business, and keeping the farming operation successful and running.

Almost a third of farmer-respondents (28%) said their primary data storage method is paper or other non-digitized methods in a Farm Journal study on data perspectives on the farm. Of those that don't use digital, only half have ever considered transitioning to digital.

For your retail operation, the data given to you by the farmers who entrust you with it allows you to provide value to the data. You can use it to provide more efficient advice and solutions to problems they might be facing. You are building trust between yourself as an ag retailer and the farmer by providing them with the interpretation of their data.

Enter the ag retailer into the picture.

As an ag retailer, you handle many aspects of farm operations – not just selling seeds and fertilizers. You are a supplier, a project manager, an advisor, and much more. Farm data is more valuable when quantifying something, whether it quantifies farm yields or keeps track of savings when utilizing new products.



Data is not just beneficial to the farmer but also to the ag retailer. Not your farm, not your benefit? Wrong! Farmers are coming to you for services and products, and it is the data collected from their farm that allows you to do your job to the best of your ability. If your customer doesn't keep digital records, you can help showcase its value. If they do, you can centralize and analyze their data in a way that allows you to create a single, streamlined recommendation for next year.

For example, with soil sampling data, can you make a stronger fertilizer recommendation? With yield data can you tweak next year's seed recs? Can you compare the field that didn't have fungicide applied with the one that did to prove the value of the product?

Most importantly, can you make all of these recommendations in one document so the farmer gets a 360-degree view of their farming operation? If you can, that's proving a value your competitors cannot.

WHY DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS ARE IMPORTANT

When you offer insight that helps the business grow, this adds a new layer of trust that may not have existed before.

Only about 50% of farmer respondents in the Farm Journal data survey said they had a trusted advisor who could answer their farm management system questions.

In a day where technology is used on farms and growers want to be more involved in the process, ag retailers are in a unique position to capitalize on this. Being able to accurately interpret the data brought to them and then create an actionable plan for these farms establishes a bond and trust between operation and retailer.

Using a grower management system that centralizes a simple, easy-to-use crop plan, ag retailers have a competitive advantage that allows them to offer more information, better interpretation, and better success rates. Technology has made this possible across the board for farmers and ag retailers.

03 | CHOOSE THE RIGHT GROWER MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

There is almost no industry without technology. From setting security systems and shutting off lights from your smartphone to tracking a farming operation's data – technology has taken over. It doesn't mean that it is a bad thing, just a significant change for some industries.

Ag retailers have the upper hand because they are learning these technology solutions and helping their farming customers integrate them into their operations. Once implemented, data can help find custom-fit solutions to the problems that farms faces.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR AG RETAILERS

When a grower has a problem, they seek out the help of their ag retailer (in most cases). Here is where learning the ins and outs of the technology available to collect data for farming operations come in handy.

Your customer has a problem in which they need your help finding a solution. They utilize technology that you helped them implement, so they bring it to you to help them interpret. From the data they collect, you can develop a feasible solution to their problem and even show them the potential effects of the solution.

You can't help them develop solutions if you don't have all the pieces to the puzzle. Without specific data, all you have is the farmer's word, which may not be the entire picture. If you decide without seeing everything, you could potentially cause more problems, not create a solution.

The Type of Technological Solutions Needed

You handle a lot of information as an ag retailer; seed prices, chemistry formulations, application schedules, and more. You keep track of so much information that using technology is almost necessary during this day in age. Sure, the spreadsheets of the past or filing cabinets work in the most basic sense, but with technology, you can get automated solutions – making managing accounts hands-free.

Having this information and data about a farming operation can make orders based on the individual farm data, not an assumed interpretation of data.

Even more critical, plans can be created and customized as data comes in. Software that allows ag retailers to be involved in their farming customer's operations is available and adapted for virtually every position in the agribusiness industry.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR IN AGRIBUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

One thing to keep in mind is that not all grower management systems and crop-plan creators are created the same. Some solutions weren't even designed for ag retailers but were instead adapted to try and fit into a specific scenario to be "beneficial." There are technology solutions like Growers.RALLY™ that offer many resources for both ag retailers and farm owners.

🎯 What should your solution offer?

- Pricing updates in real-time
- Access to past grow plans for a farming operation
- The ability to plan onsite in the field
- Automatic unit and package calculations
- Access to customer plans offline
- Professional farm plan deliverable creation
- A dashboard that is simple to set up
- Variable-rate prescription creation

When you use agritech, it should save you time, not cause a new set of headaches. Farmers expect that their ag retailer, the one they entrust their information to, can provide them with up-to-date information when needed. The same applies to making changes that could circumvent problems.

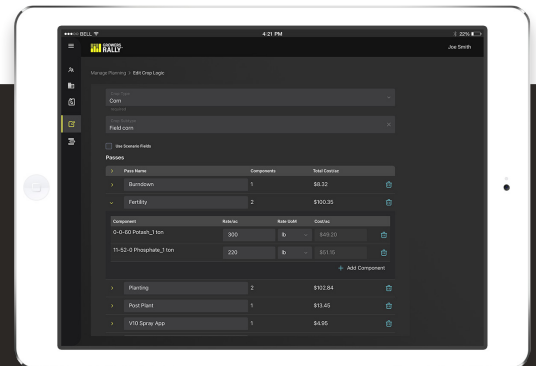
TECHNOLOGY ENHANCES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AG RETAILER AND FARMER

Technology can strengthen the relationship that you and the farmer have. Using software that helps to do the previously mentioned tasks can make finding solutions to problems easier than manually looking into it.

Some problems require you to swiftly stop them from being overly detrimental to the farmer and their operation – software like Growers.RALLY™ offers that insight, making it possible to avoid potential devastation.

You can use grower management technology to save time, make professional-grade recommendations, and share information easily across multiple platforms. With the level of organization available through software solutions, you can keep track of every customer and their operation while offering them the optimal and most efficient plans on the market.

Ag retailers who use technological solutions are setting themselves apart from the agribusiness industry – stepping into the agritech industry instead. Use technology to make your retail establishment more marketable without sacrificing the integrity of your operations.



Growers.RALLY™ combines the most important farm planning and sales engagement features into a single product. The platform helps build powerful customer relationships and offers robust planning and selling features.

Key features include:

- Setting yield goals
- Inputting products & market pricing
- Designing Crop Logics and Tank Mixes
- Creating professional reports to easily share
- And much more!

[Learn more about RALLY here.](#)

04 | IMPROVE YOUR SALES EXPERIENCE

Having a good buyer experience can almost market itself. If your sales process is simple and easy, people are more likely to do business with you. Effective salespeople excel at communication, active listening, public speaking, social psychology, and many other things besides negotiation and closing.

So what does sales excellence look like?



Prospect Pipeline

There are a finite number of acres and farmers a retailer can prospect, and it can take years to get a sale. The only way to improve the sales experience is to commit to doing a fair amount more than the required minimum. Due diligence requires you to beef up your pipeline of prospects consistently. Still, it helps as the additions combined with the professional follow-up almost ensure business growth.



Simplicity

Upon feeling comfortable with all of the insights received and research completed, it is your turn to speak or respond to requests. The one element is to keep your response SIMPLE.

Speak directly to the grower's painpoints first. Added ideas should be at the bottom of your proposal. Mark these as "Extra Ideas." The word "Ideas" eliminates pressure but indicates they should each be considered.



Conversation

Most salespeople begin selling from the moment they first encounter their prospect face to face. Aggressive selling right at the start is the worst possible approach of all. A better method is to first learn the answer as to why the grower agreed to meet with you initially. Obviously, there is a problem that requires a solution.

Your job is to uncover all of their painpoints and the best-anticipated outcome of all. At the same time, you should confirm the budget and timeline at the initial meeting to make sure you can help. Confirming those details upfront can help make your business more transparent and helpful like you care about helping instead of hiding pricing.



Etiquette

Politeness and consideration of what the farmer has to say goes a long way. Most people forget this aspect. They feel so much pressure to make the sale that all thoughtfulness is long gone. As an ag retailer, you have to keep in mind that a farmer is constantly faced with companies trying to sell to them.

The angle most of these companies try is telling the farmer that everything they're doing in their field is wrong and that they **MUST** use whatever product is being sold to them. It's better to approach a farmer understanding that they will be defensive to tactics like that. **Starting on the idea that you're there to help and not that they are doing something wrong will set you apart immediately from your competitors.**

All of the above grows your overall clients' appreciation of you. More prospects convert into clients. Clients will feel comfortable trusting and confiding in you. **In turn, sales grow within each account.**

05 | NURTURE YOUR PROSPECT RELATIONSHIPS

As anyone in the ag business knows, acquiring new customers isn't the only thing that matters. This industry thrives on *maintaining* relationships. Even though increasing the number of new clients always feels excellent, engaging with current customers is the most cost-effective way to build long-term success. After you make a sale, it can be tempting to move on to the next farmer quickly, but keep in mind that repeat customers are far more profitable than new ones.

65% of a company's business comes from its existing customers.

This stat makes it pretty clear that establishing a meaningful connection between your company and your customer after closing the deal is crucial to increasing engagement. It's just as important as making the initial deal because it increases the bottom line, strengthens your partnership, and ensures customer loyalty.

But how do you build and maintain that relationship authentically?

CONSIDER THEM PARTNERS, NOT CLIENTS

A considerable challenge for any sales team in a company is figuring out how to add the personal touch to a sales conversation. But why not make the whole process personal? Personal selling allows for those face-to-face conversations that ag retailers already excel at.

However, just having direct contact isn't the only factor that makes this approach personal. Instead of trying to make a sale at all costs, ag retailers engaged in personal selling shift to a problem-solving attitude, one aimed at helping farmers find solutions to their pain points. One quick way to start doing this is by working with a grower to identify how they want/prefer to receive information from you and then cater to that. Do they prefer texts...emails... phone calls?

When it comes to strategic business relationships, we all like to feel we have a team behind us, and farmers are no exception. A challenge for salespeople is transitioning from "order-taker" to something more hands-on and long-term. To create more value, strive to become an extension of the farmer's operation by offering them more than just the product.

Provide them with quality recommendations, ask what their most significant needs are, and offer ways in which your business could help address those needs. Shifting from being just a 'stop' on the customer's farm to being a partner will establish that your team doesn't just fill supply orders but are trusted advisors.

PROVIDE VALUE TO THEIR DATA

They are likely to have already seen the latest stats on hybrid performance or the newest commodity price postings. And, probably don't need to be reminded of these numbers again. Instead, take that data, and demonstrate how it can be translated into a successful growing season in their specific operation. Turn that information into actionable and strategic actions that have tangible results that they will find valuable.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Part of what it means to maintain a high level of engagement with customers is to dialogue with them consistently. To do a great job at this requires a more in-depth conversation about how to add sustainability programs with growers. Crop diversity, soil health, and climactic zones mean that no two growers are alike.

Having the knowledge, resources, and access to tools for more meaningful conversations around this will strengthen your value. It's important to note here that while the ag industry does see the most success with in-person conversations, there are alternative ways to keep the conversation going when being onsite is not an option. It can be done in the form of a personalized check-in email, phone call, or even video chat. Any platform or media can be personalized.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Engagement works best when customers feel like they have a genuine relationship with a brand. It can't happen in a single transaction but an ongoing conversation. You can't expect your customers only to tune in when you have a new product to sell. You need to have a constant presence and help them understand that there is a real value between your businesses.

Don't bombard them with data and no context; tell them a success story. Treat them as partners, provide real value to the information you're giving them, and nurture that partnership. Do those three things, and consistent engagement will always feel authentic.

As an ag retailer, you sit at the crossroads between input suppliers and the farm gate — and are uniquely positioned to deliver on a digital transformation that will bring value to growers. It's essential to recognize your value proposition and learn how to promote it so that your retail business stands out from the competition. Don't be the one to only win on price; differentiate yourself. Start implementing the best practices we've covered and build your grower relationships.

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