Understanding Your Audience:
Communicating that Leads to Learning and Action

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Learning Goals for Today

1. Understand the different decision making models of farmers
2. Explore strategies to maximize the reach of your events
3. Study messaging techniques to impact the largest group of untapped farmers
The Many Factors in Decision Making

1. Values/emotions
2. Social support
3. Change aversion
4. Access to information
5. Economic ROI
The Different Thought Processes of Innovators and Late Adopters

• Innovators:
  • Are more comfortable with uncertainty
  • See failure as part of progress
  • Use longer timeframes and wider criteria to evaluate options
  • Do not respond as readily to social pressure

• Late Adopters:
  • Are uncomfortable with uncertainty
  • See failure as a stain on their reputation
  • Use short time-frames and narrow criteria
  • Are concerned with what others do to define what they will do
The Need for Improved Outreach and Messaging:

1. Decision making under risk/uncertainty does not fit rational economic approach
   - Safety in groups
   - Non-voluntary public occupation
   - Uncertain info, status quo is safest

2. Not all farmers think alike
Break #1

Take 2 minutes to answer questions 4 and 5 on your guide
It’s all about how you frame it!
Traditional Frames for Conservation

Economics
Yield
Water quality
Alternative Frames

• Risk management
• Religious values
• Drinking water quality (for local community) and climate (for global community)
• Supply chain sustainability
• Legacy value of farming (leaving it better for next generation)
• Others?
How do you start

• What is your end goal?
• Who is your audience?
• What are the different factors in how your target audience makes decisions?
• Which factor would best get their attention?
Choose correct speaker for frame

Who would best present the chosen frame?
Who would be most persuasive with your audience?
Who can present the frame most authentically?
Consider the Atmosphere

Consider conditions that will make your audience feel most comfortable to discuss the challenges, barriers, fears and benefits of change.
Power of Side Conversations

- Reinforcement
- Eavesdropping
- Timing
Small Group Activity

1. Break into small groups

2. Work with your group to determine an alternative/ non traditional frame (not crop production or financial) to present at the event

3. Where would it be held?
Break #2

Take 5 minutes to answer questions 6 through 9
Strategies for Engaging Your Audience

1. Start with the motivation
2. Solve problems
3. Speak in their terms
4. Get the Disclaimer right
5. Protect the Ego
Start with the Motivation

• Need to answer their question: What is the motivation for putting in the effort to change?
• Motivation > Fear of Change
Solve Existing Problems

- General benefits not the same as solving problems
- Existing problems have more traction than potential benefits
- Solving problems = Avoiding risk
- Example: Solving the problem of poor drainage and N loss

Photos taken August 8th, 2016. No till corn planted 5 days before conventional till.
Speak Their Language, Not Yours

Words to Avoid:
• Innovative
• New
• Trial and error
• Learning curve
• Experiment
• Try it
• Every farm is different

Use:
• “This is what we do.”
• “A key part of (weed, risk, nutrient) management.
• Easier
• Simple steps to success
• Increasingly common
• Basic principles to productive soil
Protecting the Ego

Provide a means for your audience to protect their ego for past refusal to change:

• Acknowledge legitimate reasons for not adopting earlier.
• Tie to new reasons for adopting now
Messaging Recap:

1. Start with the Motivation
2. Solve problems
3. Speak in their terms
4. Get the Disclaimer right
5. Protect the ego
Wrapping up

Complete questions 10 through 13 on the second page of your worksheet.