Surviving The First Year In Extension Agribusiness

What Agricultural Economics Ph.D.'s Don't Prepare Us For

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Agribusiness Is Growing

House & Sterns Report:

- 12 Ph.D. Ag Econ Programs With An Agribusiness Field
- 41% Of Tenure-Track Faculty Positions Advertised In 2001 Exchange Had An Agribusiness Component
- 60% Of Current & Recent Graduates Have An Agribusiness Specialization
Ag Econ Graduate Programs vs. Agribusiness Extension

Ag Econ

- Heavy On Theory, Research Methods, & Quantitative Methods

Agribusiness

- Need Strategic, Financial, & Human Resource Management
Agribusiness Management Topics Learned By Agribusiness Students

- **Strategic Management**
  - 70% → Classes, Research, Seminars
  - 45% → Ag Econ Classes

- **Financial Management**
  - 50-60% → Classes, Research, Seminars
  - 20-40% → Ag Econ Classes

- **Human Resource Management**
  - 25% → Classes, Research, Seminars
  - 7% → Ag Econ Classes

Source: House & Sterns
When Are We Taught How To Build An Extension Program?

- Graduate School Focuses On Creating A Research Program
- Some Teaching Opportunities In Graduate School
- Only 4% Of Ag Econ Grad Students Have An Extension Assistantship

(Mark, Daniel, & Lusk)
Students “Sign Onto” Faculty’s Research Projects

- Does This Prepare Them To Identify Needs For Applied Work?

Ag Econ Grad Students Averaged Less Than 1 Hour/Week Doing Extension Work (Mark, Daniel, & Lusk)
Could We Teach Extension?

Extension Methods Class
- Teach Program Design, Delivery, Outcome Assessment, etc.
- Students Could Create A Program

Apprenticeship
- Needs To Be An Incentive For Students
Why New Agribusiness Ext. Programs Are Difficult To Start

1. Not Sure How Agribusinesses & Trade Associations Work In State
   - Learn The Culture & History
   - Figure Out Who Gets Along With Who
   - Avoid Becoming Their Employee
Why New Agribusiness Ext. Programs Are Difficult To Start

2. Previous Extension Programs

- What Was Done In The Past?
- Change Is Difficult
- Change Is Necessary
- Clientele Will Judge The New Program Against The Old
Why New Agribusiness Ext. Programs Are Difficult To Start

3. Unsure Of Clientele’s Needs
   • They May Not Know Themselves
Why New Agribusiness Ext. Programs Are Difficult To Start

4. Delivery Methods Differ Across Audiences
   • Seminar vs. Active Learning
   • Distance vs. In-Person
How Do We Overcome These?

- Listen, Ask Questions, & Listen More
  - Don’t Focus Exclusively On The Leaders, Focus On Who Will Be There In The Future
- Make Changes Slowly But Deliberately
- Develop Relationships With Clientele
Fostering New Relationships

- No “Ivory Tower” Economists
- Be One Of Them
- Care About The Areas In Which You Work
- Be “Media Friendly”
The Great Balancing Act
Extension, Research, & Teaching

- Research Is Part Of The Extension Program
  - Schedule Time For It
  - If You Don’t, You Run Out Of Things To Say

- Teaching Is Part Of The Extension Program
  - Classes Become More Practical
  - It Can Be An Advantage – Good Reason To Stay On Campus
Managing The Balancing Act
Saying “No” Without Guilt

Establish Your Priorities Based On Your Understanding Of Clientele’s Need For Ext. Programming

- These Can Differ From Clientele’s, Senior Faculty’s, & Administrator’s Priorities For You
- Do Not Compromise Your Priorities
Managing The Balancing Act
Saying “No” Without Guilt

What To Say “No” To:

- Things Low On The Priority List
- Requests That Require A Lot Of Time
- Projects Not In The Scope Of Your Program
- Projects With Low Return
Managing The Balancing Act

Do The Things You Do Well
Let Promotion & Tenure Take Care Of Themselves