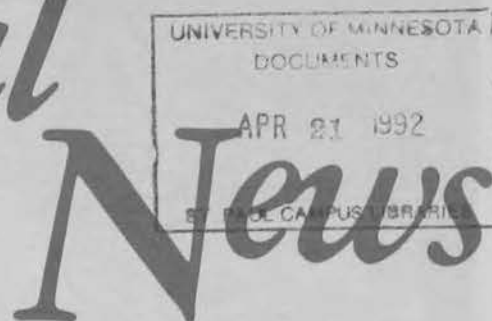


Agricultural



Volume 4, Issue 2

March/April 1992

Good programs attract funding, news media:

Public Relations a 'Value Added'

John Shutske says understanding the basic goals of the funding agency is the key to successful grant proposals.

Shutske, farm safety specialist with the Minnesota Extension Service (MES), has written "four or five" major grant proposals. Recently he's been successful.

He and a team of researchers in the Agricultural Engineering Department were funded for a research project on tractor and farm machinery safety. And in early April he received tentative approval for another proposal he'd submitted to the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (ES-USDA).

MES is scheduled to get about one-fourth of the grant monies to help pay for educational programs, Shutske says. The majority of the funding will go to two partner organizations—Goodwill Easter Seals and Rural Rehab Technology of St. Peter, Minn.

The federal grant monies will be used to deliver technical information and services to Minnesota farmers

and family members with disabilities. "Many times these services are most needed where they're least available," Shutske says.

"Many farmers are injured; they want to stay in farming but are often forced to move off the farm. There's a loss of self-esteem and traumatic, emotional costs involved."

The three organizations—MES, Goodwill Easter Seals and Rural Rehab Technology—each have a program or "marketing" niche.

Goodwill Easter Seals wanted to expand its services to rural areas; Rural Rehab was small and didn't have the resources to go statewide; and MES could link the statewide program through county offices and provide research based information.

The program has a "REACH" that stands for "Resources and Empowerment for AgrAbility (leaders) Close to Home." It will be linked with the Extension Service leadership program, Shutske says.

Eight teams strategically located throughout Minnesota will be the key. The teams will consist of an



extension agent (agriculture, 4-H or home economics) and two farmers with disabilities who are willing to take their training, knowledge and leadership skills back to their county or cluster area.

"The leadership and supporting team funding will go to local communities for creative programs aimed at rural citizens with disabilities," Shutske says. Suggested programs

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This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

Focus groups a "Reality Check"

Grants/Continued from p. 1



Focus group sessions with clients are a good "reality check" to help verify or invalidate audience needs, says **Gary Hachfeld**, agriculture agent and county extension director in Nicollet County.

Hachfeld and several co-workers used focus groups to help plan the "Managing Our Farm Family Future" (MOFFF) program in the late 1980s. "We wanted to 'get at' how to structure delivery of the MOFFF program," he says.

The team consisted of Hachfeld plus several agents and state staff, including Merv Freeman, Ken Olson, Sheryl Nefstead, Joan Sprain, Martha Harder, Marian Anderson, Ken Thomas and Sharon Danes.

The focus group participants included clients with prior experience in the "original" MOFFF program, those picked at random, extension committee members, and other farm family members who "had been doing a good job of farm management," Hachfeld says.

Four focus group sessions were held, with an average of 9 to 12 people per group.

...The MOFFF program was a viable issue...

"We learned the (MOFFF program topic) was a viable issue that extension needed to address," Hachfeld says. "Clients also told us it was hard to find time to go to 16 hours of intensive training. And, they liked the exercises on personal, family and farm business goal setting," he says.

In terms of research to implement the MOFFF program, "the focus groups were a substantive, active and beneficial way of getting information," Hachfeld says.

Hachfeld also participated in recent focus group studies on extension's agricultural outlook and marketing programs.

...the focus group sessions were extremely beneficial...

"I thought these sessions were extremely beneficial. Farmers were very open, and not intimidated by the presence of agents in the room," he says.

"In extension work we need to be in touch with and talking to the people we work with. Focus groups provide a structured, yet relaxed atmosphere to do this," he adds.

—Jack Sperbeck

include information displays on "assistive technologies" at county fairs, libraries and on local cable television.

"These are only ideas," Shutske emphasizes. "We don't want to dampen creativity. The volunteer leaders are free to brainstorm and develop programs they think will work."

Farm safety must be a constant theme

"Farm safety" must become pervasive in rural communities, Shutske believes. "The farm is a very dangerous place to work. There are 200 to 300 children killed while working in U.S. agriculture every year. Many more are seriously injured. If the agricultural industry doesn't address the problem there's a good chance that government regulations will.

"Agriculture has the chance—now—to proactively address the safety issue. If that doesn't happen, there's a good chance that regulations will be shoved down our throats in 10 to 15 years," he emphasizes.

"Safety needs to become the **main topic** when farm machinery is sold, in schools, casual conversations and the news media. The news media, insurance companies, health care industry and teachers can be a powerful force in making farms more safe.

"The news media are a great delivery tool for extension programs, but too often the media only react to tragic farm accidents.

"I'd like the news media to pay more attention to important, 'every day' safety issues that save lives and prevent disabling injuries," Shutske concludes.

In other words, the news media's important niche in farm safety education can be strengthened.

—Jack Sperbeck

Agricultural News is a publication of the Agriculture Program Area, produced by Educational Development System, Minnesota Extension Service. Ideas for stories and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact Jack Sperbeck, 447 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Tel. 612-625-1794.

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The National Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference... *(continued from reverse side)*



Kelso L. Wessel, agricultural economist from Ohio State University, said direct marketers must "Focus Your Marketing in the 90's" during his keynote address. Photo by Don Breneman



John Cottingham, extension marketing specialist, University of Wisconsin, Platteville, discusses marketing strategy during one of the conference break-out sessions. Photo by Don Breneman



Carol Aho, of Homestead Mills, offers samples of the cereal and pancake products they direct market from their grain elevator in Cook, Minnesota. Photo by Don Breneman

The National Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference...

It was four years in the making. Program planners started working that far ahead to identify direct marketers in Minnesota and plan the program.

It all came together in late January, 1992, when Minnesota hosted the 7th National Farmers' Direct Marketing Association's annual conference. About 550 people from throughout the U.S. and Canada attended.

"Like farmer-direct marketers, we in extension work must look for market niches," says Don Olson, agriculture program leader. "We are marketing educational programs and products. People will attend our programs and buy our products if they're of high quality," he says.



Nancy Jacobson explains the family's Pine Tree Orchards business. Nancy and John Jacobson chaired the pre-conference tour committee.

In addition to fruit production and a "scratch" bakery business, the Jacobson's provide family entertainment, including music, pick your own pumpkins, wagon rides, and groomed cross country ski trails. The family is involved in many community events and sponsors charity fund raisers.

Photo by Don Breneman

Cheesemakers at Eichten's Hidden Acres display their products to pre-conference tour participants. Hidden Acres was originally a dairy farm. In the 1970's, the Eichten family got involved with a University of Minnesota pilot project that involved making their own cheese and direct marketing it. They specialize in European style cheeses. Photo by Don Breneman



(Over)

'92 Calendar: a marketing success

On April 8, 1992 the computer screen on Grace Rowland's desk read 10,176 gardening calendars sold with \$33,361 of income.

"We have 533 calendars left if you'd like to buy one," she said.

The 1992 **Minnesota Gardening** calendar features "Beautiful photography" and "Timely gardening information," according to a sales promotion display in the Coffey Hall (St. Paul Campus) basement walk-through tunnel.

Rowland, a communications technician who works in the Distribution Center, says the beautiful photography and timely gardening tips are big selling points. "We've had some repeat buyers (from last year) call to ask about the calendar.

"They like the gardening tips and beautiful photos. Some callers say they've looked in bookstores, but can't find calendars with gardening tips like this," she said. "One caller asked if the tips were going to be the same as last year, or if they'd changed."

Marketing coordinator Sam Brungardt, with the Educational Development System (EDS), planned the calendar's marketing effort well ahead of the off-the-press date. He had calendars available in many bookstores; and kept a careful tab on who (including county offices), was promoting and selling them.

The calendar was a joint project of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station and the Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota. Extension horticulturists Deborah Brown and Anne Hanchek were the content specialists.

In EDS, project coordinator was Don Breneman. Design and graphics contributors were Michael Ruetten, John Molstad and John Seppanen of EDS's agriculture team.

—Jack Sperbeck

Planning Quality Extension Programs

Using Market Research Techniques

If you've followed this column during the past 18 months you likely will recall that applying marketing concepts and using market research techniques were discussed in several issues of *Agricultural News*. Since this entire issue is focused on marketing, I'd like to share a **current** example of using marketing research in program planning.

There have been several instances where market research has been used by Minnesota Extension Service staff in recent years. Many people have taken Dick Krueger's MESS course on using focus groups and/or are familiar with his book on using focus groups. Perhaps the most **recent** example is an effort lead by Kent Thiesse, in cooperation with Stan Stevens, Curt Norenburg, Jack Sperbeck, Gary Hachfeld, Harlan Johnsrud, Warren Sifferath, Dave Preisler and myself. This effort is a formative (program process) evaluation intended to gather information that will help in determining whether we need to change our agricultural marketing program content and delivery methods.

As many of you know (we hope!), Kent, Gary, Harlan, Dave and Warren have been collaborating on a monthly marketing newsletter for their clientele, which is available to other extension staff on EXTEND. Recently they conducted an evaluative survey of the clientele who receive the newsletter. Stan Stevens has evaluated the Agricultural Outlook Conference and teaching materials on several occasions. All of this information has been useful, but additional information is needed to get a better idea of what clientele think of our marketing program efforts and how we might serve them better in the future.

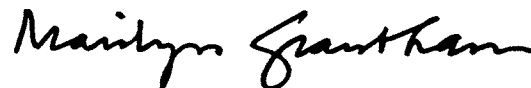
Kent is on study leave Winter and Spring Quarters this year so he talked with Stan Stevens and Curt Norenberg (Curt is the Agricultural Outlook conference coordinator as well as Kent's academic advisor) about a special project to gather information about our marketing education program that would add to previous evaluation efforts. He decided to conduct a series of focus groups in Blue Earth, Mower, Nicollet, and Dakota Counties, that would provide more in-depth feedback from marketing program participants.

In addition, the Agriculture Program Area and EDS have for some time been interested in evaluating the effectiveness of the Agricultural Outlook supplements that originally appeared in *The Farmer* magazine, and more recently in *Ag Week* and *Agri-News*. Jack Sperbeck volunteered to conduct a sample *Agri-News* readership survey, as well as participate in the focus group research with Kent and myself.

We conducted five focus group interviews during the last week in February—one with producers in each of the four participating counties and a fifth in Mankato with agribusiness people, bankers, and adult vocational agriculture instructors. Kent and Jack are currently working on summarizing the interview information and will be sharing it with state and county staff in a variety of ways.

Some of the questions that we asked included "How do you get market/ag outlook information?" "How useful is the information from the county agent's office?" "How do you use the information in the Extension Service's marketing newsletter?" "How do you feel about alternative ways of getting market/outlook information, such as satellite or condensed video?" and "What could Extension do to attract other farmers, particularly women who are interested in marketing, to our marketing education programs?"

So, "stay tuned" for the information that will soon be available from the summary of these research efforts. Kent and Jack plan to complete their focus group analysis and summarize implications and recommendations before the end of Spring Quarter. Then we will share the information in several ways, including additional articles in *Agricultural News*.



Marilyn Grantham
Program Leader

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Whether to copyright...is the decision of the program area...

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—Dave McAllister