ALWAYS INNOVATING

by Maud Roucan-Kane and Dr. Michael Boehlje

WHEN DOING THE WEEKLY SHOPPING, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO MISS THE NEW PRODUCTS LINING THE SHELVES. CUSTOMERS ARE OFTEN LIKE KIDS — THEY GET BORED WITH CURRENT TOYS AND ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEWER, BETTER, SUPER TOYS.

AS AN AGRI-MARKETER, YOU HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO APPLY YOUR ANTHROPOLOGIST SKILLS. FOR EXAMPLE, PRECISION AGRICULTURE AND SITE SPECIFIC PRODUCTION IS DISCUSSED A LOT TODAY. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS FARMERS HAVE USING THE EQUIPMENT, UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS, OR DETERMINING WHETHER THEY HAVE A NEED FOR THE PRODUCT IS CRITICAL TO SELLING THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY. SEARCH OUT CLUES ON HOW TO MARKET THESE PRODUCTS BETTER. COMMUNICATE WITH MANUFACTURERS ON WHICH PARTS OF THE TECHNOLOGY COULD BE IMPROVED, HOW THE USER MANUAL COULD BE MORE EXPLANATORY, OR HOW RESULTS COULD BE BETTER PRESENTED.

SEED COMPANIES ARE DEVELOPING NEW TRAITS TO MAKE ETHANOL PLANTS MORE EFFICIENT IN THEIR USE OF CORN. AS AN AGRI-MARKETER, THIS NEW AVENUE IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR A HURDLER. RIGHT NOW, ETHANOL PLANTS ARE NOT PAYING FARMERS BASED ON THE EXTRACTABLE STARCH CONTENT OF CORN. AS A HURDLER, IT'S AN OCCASION TO ASSIST ETHANOL PLANTS IN UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF HIGHER EXTRACTABLE STARCH CORN, THE NEED TO CHANGE THEIR PAYMENT PROCEDURE, COMMUNICATE THE CHANGES TO THE FARMERS, AND SELL FARMERS THE NEW TRAIT.

SELLING HORSE FEED TO A HIGH-INCOME RURALPOLITAN IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO USE YOUR STORYTELLING AND CAREGIVING SKILLS. TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF THE CUSTOMER, AND THEN EXPLAIN IN PLAIN ENGLISH THE ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS OF EACH OF YOUR AVAILABLE PRODUCT.

THERE ARE A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN TRYING TO STIMULATE INNOVATION WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION. HIRE PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS (CULTURE, RELIGION, COUNTRY, EDUCATION), AS IT WILL SPUR MORE INNOVATIVE IDEAS. TAP INTO THE RESOURCES OF INTERNS AND YOUNG EMPLOYEES, AS THEY ARE NOT CONSTRAINED BY HISTORICAL CHOICES OR THE BINDERS OTHERS WITHIN THE FIRM MAY HAVE. LOYAL CUSTOMERS ARE TIRED OF GETTING GIFTS THAT GATHER DUST; THEY WANT AN EXPERIENCE — TAKE THEM ON A FISHING TRIP OR BUY THEM A FEW TICKETS TO A PURDUE FOOTBALL GAME. AM

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