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Surviving The First Year In Extension Agribusiness

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

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Presented at the 2003 WCC-72 Meetings



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
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Ag Econ Graduate Programs vs. Agribusiness Extension

Ag Econ

- **Heavy On Theory, Research Methods,
& Quantitative Methods**

Agribusiness

- **Need Strategic, Financial, & Human
Resource Management**
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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



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)
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Ag Econ Graduate School

- **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)
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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
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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**
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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**
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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**
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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
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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**
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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**
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Managing The Balancing Act

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