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LESSONS FROM THE PAST

for

EXTENSION MARKETING PROGRAMS OF THE FUTURE

by

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Criticism comes more easily than does creativity for most of us. Thus, finding fault with the past comes more easily than does gleaning insightful lessons for future extension marketing programs from shortcomings of those in the past. Fault finding may serve to focus attention on problems. But, more value results when constructive suggestions for change are linked to those problems. Thus, I will deal with perceived past shortcomings for which I have constructive suggestions for future change. This greatly limits the possible scope of this paper. I simply am not a qualified, constructive critic for the full scope of extension marketing programs. I am an agricultural economist, and thus deal with the full range of economic concepts and principles as they apply to my area of work. But, my area of primary expertise is marketing programs oriented to producer decision making. I am fully aware of and appreciate the value of marketing programs which deal with marketing firm management and with marketing and pricing systems. But, I will focus on what I know best, producer level marketing.

Good Producers But Lousy Marketers

Past progress in agricultural production efficiency in the United States is unequaled by any other country at any other time in history. This fact is recognized in general by congress, by university and extension administrators, by agricultural economists, by agricultural producers and by the general public. But, all these groups perceive major problems in marketing the fruits of our highly efficient production system.

Legislators blame inefficient markets and marketing methods for unstable supply and price levels which generate complaints from their constituents. Our university and extension administrators are quick to point to contributions of public research and extension in production efficiency, but are somewhat apologetic about contributions in marketing. Even those within our profession give little attention to progress in marketing when measuring contributions of research and extension to social welfare. Consumers generally blame "middlemen", ie. marketers, for what they perceive to be high food prices. Some producers mistakenly blame middlemen and market speculators for many farm level problems. But, even the most thoughtful of producers often perceive their basic problems as markets and marketing rather than production. Even the best of producers often perceive themselves as lousy marketers.

This paper was invited to deal with "the ugly--facts extension has failed to face and required changes in extension marketing programs" following other papers on "the good" and "the bad" extension programs of the past.

Some of the shortcomings of past programs in marketing are problems of perception rather than problems of substance. Middlemen, speculators, those involved in marketing in general are much less numerous than either consumers or producers. Thus, marketers are convenient scapegoats for real or illusionary problems related to prices, costs and profits. Producers sometimes view marketing problems as periodic prices below production costs or inability of individual producers to sell consistently at peak prices. These perceptions of efficient marketing reflect unrealistic expectations. But, there are some real problems related to agricultural marketing that we as economists have failed to address adequately. I will focus on those real problems that relate to marketing decisions of producers.

Our producer clientele have not learned to be effective marketing decision makers. Most producers probably would prefer to avoid making any marketing decisions at all. In other words, they produce because they like to and market because they have to. Their marketing strategies tend to be defensive rather than offensive in nature. A survey by Bolen in 1979 asked producers to rank their overall marketing objectives. A reasonable profit was the objective ranked first with higher than average price, meet cash flow needs, top price and average price following in that order.

Bolen asked producers to rank also their motivation for selling production. They consistently ranked reasonable prices, servicing debts and spreading sales over time, as important marketing considerations. Grain farmers, however, ranked selling when they expected prices to go down as their top priority and livestock farmers ranked lower price expectations as number three out of ten. But, even these expectation-based strategies seemed to be oriented toward avoiding losses rather than generating profits from marketing decisions.

Defensive marketing strategies seem quite logical to us as extension economists. But, such strategies reflect an attitude that producers must protect themselves in marketing so they can keep what they have gained from producing. We do not want to create unrealistic expectations of likely results from effective marketing strategies. But, are we instilling a fear of marketing in our producer clientele in our attempts to avoid unrealistic expectations? Can we expect producers to eagerly pursue expertise in an area they have been lead to fear?

The marketing system with a "major focus on marketing strategies for agricultural producers" leads the list of program priorities in the USDA-NASULGC planning publication, Extension In '80s. Producers on extension Program Planning and Advisory Committees in Oklahoma consistently have ranked marketing at or near the top of their lists of priority problem areas. Oklahoma producers quite likely are not greatly different from those in other major agricultural states with respect to their self-perceived competence in marketing. Agricultural producers' admissions of inadequacy with respect to marketing are common in the popular press. Meetings featuring producer presentations and panels almost invariably highlight lack of marketing expertise as a major problem of agriculture today.

Over and over the message comes through, farmers and ranchers are good producers but lousy marketers. Legislators hear this message and ask why we as scientists and educators have made so much progress in production and so little in marketing. It is a rare university or extension administrator who has good answers for such questions. Few administrators above the department head level have solid economics training and even administrator-economists are likely to be production oriented.

Marketing economists often are left to "twist in the fire" when irate producers complain to administrators that one of their economists missed a price forecast or suggested an unprofitable marketing decision. Consequently, marketing specialists have become reluctant to do anything that might generate complaints, even if such complaints would result only from gross misuse of the information or procedures presented. This retreat from the "firing line" often has left us with abstract concepts and examples of marketing decisions based on vaguely worded statements of price expectations. Producers see such programs as having little relevance to their day-to-day struggle with marketing decisions.

Marketing economists face similar difficulties in teaching such topics as hedging with commodity futures markets. Producers, frustrated by lack of marketing expertise and understanding, are quick to blame their disappointments of futures market speculators. Administrators lack the understanding necessary to provide adequate defense for objective, educational programs in this area. Economists retreat to cautious, indecisive presentations of hedging that lack clear relevance to most producers' marketing problems.

Our past failures to deal effectively with marketing decisions have created an environment of skepticism and misunderstanding which makes our task even more difficult today. Our lack of past achievements makes it difficult to generate political support for major new programs. Our administrators lack clear cut marketing success stories either to add to their understanding or to point to as examples of achievement. We as marketing economists tend to approach our tasks with timidity and defensiveness, stinging from past criticisms and lacking strong administrative support for our work. And, our clientele see marketing as a necessary evil at best and just plain evil in some aspects. Our past shortcomings are major contributors to the difficulty of our future challenges.

Misdirections Of Our Past Extension Programs

Some past problems of marketing extension programs are inherent in the nature of marketing. Marketing is an intangible, abstract process that is difficult to explain in clear, concrete terms. Marketing efficiency is an illusive concept that is difficult to define or measure. Thus, producers rarely are able to point to successes in their marketing programs with the same pride or satisfaction they realize from production successes. Likewise, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness or success of extension marketing programs that relate to producer decisions. Such problems present challenges for the future but are inherent in the nature of our work. We could have made more progress in dealing with these problems, but they could not have been avoided.

Marketing: Beyond The Farm Gate Other basic problems of the past could have been avoided with more effective extension programming. Extension marketing programs for producers were almost totally disrupted in the 1960s by an legislative mandate for marketing economists to focus on problems beyond the farm gate. Added funds were made available for marketing extension work in the late 1950's and early 1960s. But such funds came with the stipulation that marketing be defined as work with marketing firms rather with producers. Different states enforced this distinction between farm and firm level marketing with different degrees of rigor. In Oklahoma, for example, one marketing specialist had to convince administrators that feed lots were actually marketing firms rather than producers to gain approval for a plan of work dealing with feed lots.

Marketing work with retailers, processors, marketing agencies, etc. likely was an appropriate priority area for marketing work of the 1950s and 1960s. The 1960s in particular were a time of large grain stocks, growing consumer demand and relatively stable prices for crops and livestock alike. Producer marketing problems seemed minimal in this stable market environment. But, near total exclusion of producer concerns from extension marketing work of the 1960s left extension unprepared for the highly volatile markets of the 1970s.

Opening of world markets, drought, and spiralling inflation resulted in skyrocketing prices for grains and livestock in the early 1970s. Chaotic ups and downs in prices have followed with economic recession, periodic inflation and various world crises on both economic and military fronts. Producers have seen market prices swing by 50% or more during reasonable pricing periods for one year's crop or livestock production. Decisions concerning what, when, where and how to price and sell have meant the difference between large profits and large losses. Consistent ability or lack of ability to market effectively has meant the difference between wealth and bankruptcy.

Extension marketing programs have reflected a response to producers' needs of the 1970s and 1980s. Valuable programs for marketing firms have continued but at a lower level of priority than during the earlier decade. Marketing economists are no longer restricted in their work with producers. Major educational programs dealing with market outlook, futures markets and marketing alternatives in general were geared up in the 1970s to help producers make marketing decisions in the volatile market environment of the period. But, extension marketing was playing "catch-up." We did not have a decade of producer marketing know-how from the 1960s to build on. Potential progress in producer marketing in the 1960s had been sacrificed for the sake of problems "beyond the farm gate."

Misdirected Market Outlook Later misdirections of extension marketing programs cannot be so easily blamed on administrative priorities. A survey of marketing extension workers by Sprouse, Trieb and Smith in 1982 indicated that outlook information was the main topic of over one-third of all extension meetings reported. Outlook and situation meetings accounted for over 48 percent of all producers attending extension marketing meetings during the survey period. Outlook information also captures a major share of information disseminated by mass media including magazines, newspapers, radio and television. Few would question the value of outlook information as a

means to gain a producer audience for marketing education. But, how conscientiously are we in integrating marketing education with our outlook work?

Marketing extension is sometimes criticized by private firms for competing with their privately supplied outlook information. This criticism has validity only to the extent that extension outlook programs are service rather than educational in orientation. However, there is a strong tendency toward service at the expense of education in extension outlook work. Producers want price forecasts on which to base decisions. Producers are not always patient in taking the educational "medicine" that comes with the informational "spoonful of sugar." Those in control of mass media have even less patience in integrating what they see as low priority teaching with high priority market information. Consequently, we often make undefensible resource commitments to market outlook programs which provide services largely available from the private sector.

Our outlook programs are subject to challenge on grounds of effectiveness as well as orientation. Our record for accuracy has not been impressive. And until recently, we as market analysts were not leveling with our clientele regarding the level of accuracy we were able to achieve. We verbally discouraged unrealistic expectations concerning our outlook accuracy. But, we were reluctant to admit the magnitude of our forecast errors, even to ourselves.

The positive nature of our statements in assessment of market conditions, our analytical sophistication and our logical conclusions lead producers to believe we "know" what prices are going to be, even though we tell them we do not. But even as we exude an air of confidence, we generally have been reluctant to be specific with respect to our price forecasts. We have left the impression that we know something of value but that we choose not to share that knowledge with our clientele. They have tried to read between the lines of our vague statement for information useful in making marketing decisions. Such decisions frequently fail to produce the desired results. The producer is left wondering whether he or she interpreted the information incorrectly or whether the analysis was in error. In reality, they may have made a wise decision based on competent analysis. But, vagueness in our forecasts and the context in which we present them diminishes any potential educational value.

Market outlook can be a powerful tool for educational programming in extension marketing. Even service oriented outlook programs can be justified in cases where producers would underinvest, from a social standpoint, in privately provided market information. But, we have misused outlook in our past extension marketing programs. This misuse is due in part to our eagerness to give producers what they want. But, lack of a clear concept of our educational objectives and of the necessary means of achieving those objectives has been a major factor contributing to our lack of success.

Those who would defend our past outlook programs must recognize the dominance of outlook in our total extension marketing efforts. They must defend their contribution to our extension marketing achievements and in turn must defend the success of our total programming effort in the marketing area. There are past successes to point to with pride.

But, our time likely will be better spent gleaning lessons from our past failures and dedicating our efforts to producing a dominance of easily defended future successes.

The Basic Fact We Failed To Face: Extension Is Education

Misdirections in past extension marketing programs reflect some basic facts that extension marketing has failed to face. First, our abandonment of producer marketing programs in the decade of the 1960s reflected a denial of a basic purpose for which extension was created. Extension was formed to provide information and education for those unable to conduct research or educational programs on their own. Marketing firm work can be justified from the standpoint of social benefits relative to social costs. But, abandonment of information and educational programs for producers in the vital area of marketing decisions cannot. That lesson from the past seems to have been learned, as reflected by recent increased programming emphasis on producer marketing decisions. But, there are other facts from past failures that we as yet have not faced.

The basic mission of agricultural extension is defined by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, as amended in later years. Section 1 of Smith-Lever charges extension with diffusing useful and practical information related to agriculture and with encouraging its application. Section 2 defines extension work as giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agricultural subjects to persons not resident in colleges and imparting information to them through demonstrations, publications and otherwise. Emphasis often is placed on section 1, diffusion and application of research based information, with little recognition of the basic educational nature of extension work as defined in section 2. The basic role of extension is to educate, to cause to know. The primary purpose of information diffusion is to support the educational function of extension. We are charged to encourage application of information, but promotion of change and direct public service are secondary to the basic educational mission of extension.

The mission of producer marketing extension work, as defined by Smith-Lever, is to educate producers in the subject of marketing through giving of instruction and practical demonstrations and imparting information through demonstrations, publications and otherwise. In other words, we are to teach producers how to make effective marketing decisions. We are to instruct them by using appropriate market information and through methods including demonstration, publications or any other methods deemed appropriate. Our students are producers located off campus, throughout our respective states. They are business men and women actively involved in agriculture. They are adults with adult characteristics and responsibilities. Our basic mission is to educate these producers in the subject matter area of marketing.

Malcolm Knowles, a noted adult educator, defines several basic characteristics of adult learners that are key to the success or failure of adult education programs. Adults are self-directed. They want to choose the time, place and pace at which they learn. Adults have differing levels of experience. The cardinal rule of extension, and adult education in general, is to start with people where they are and to help them reach where they want to be. Adults are life-centered

or real-world oriented in their learning interests. They respond to "teachable-moment" situations in which they see a personal benefit from learning. Finally, adult learners are problem-centered in their actions. They will respond to learning situations whenever they see immediate application of results in solving a specific problem or exploiting a specific opportunity.

How many of our outlook, marketing alternative or other producer marketing programs of the past address these needs and desires of our adult clientele? The county or area level meeting has been our primary teaching method of the past. How does a county meeting rate with respect of letting producers choose the time, place and pace at which they become informed or learn? How many of us still make the yearly rounds of outlook meetings? Do our producers need market information just once a year, at the time we happen to be in his county? Electronic communications has made rapid delivery of timely information into a producers' homes possible and cost effective. There no longer are logical excuses for our choosing the time, place and pace of learning in many areas of producer marketing.

How flexible are our programs in reaching producers where they are with respect to marketing expertise? How many marketing programs have we developed for small, part-time farmers, for example? How many of us teach futures without considering that futures may be only an information source of one producer, a pricing tool for another, a basis for cash contracting for another and a substitute for cash market speculation for still another? How often do we implicitly assume that futures "should" be used in one way by all, from the way we design and present our futures programs? Do we pitch our marketing alternatives programs to a variety of experience levels or treat all as being equally well prepared to learn what we choose to teach? Another related golden rule of extension the KISS rule: keep it simple stupid. But, how often are we able to make marketing simple enough for all to understand? Simply put, we tend to teach at our level, someone who spends all day every day with marketing concerns, not the level of our producers. Our producers vary from marketing experts to those who thinks about marketing only at harvest time.

Life-centered and problem-centered characteristics of adult learners seem closely related. Both characteristics have similar implications for our educational programs. A life-centered orientation relates to general interests of producers regardless of their immediate problems or needs. For example, many producers have a life-centered interest in micro computers. They feel that computers will have a prominent place in their future even though they see few immediate applications. A problem-centered orientation relates to immediate needs. One of our best county agricultural agents in Oklahoma puts each program proposal to his own critical test. Can his producers expect to go home and immediately use at least something they have learned? The bottom line is that we have to kept our programs relevant to the interest and needs of our clientele. Our orientation is subject matter, theirs is day-to-day planning and decision making.

We need not sacrifice educational content to deliver interesting and practical marketing programs tailored to the individual needs of our clientele. But, we are going to have to use our imagination. Most of us were were taught to teach by osmosis in a college class room.

The teacher chose the time, place, pace, and subject matter. There was little regard for or need to cater to our individual backgrounds, interests or potential applications. Everyone had the prerequisites for the course and we all were taking it because we had to or wanted to. This method works on campus because it is designed for a campus learning environment. The same procedures used on "those persons not in resident at colleges," ie. our extension clientele, are a recipe for failure. Too often in the past, our off-campus extension marketing programs have had too many characteristics of course we took or taught on campus. We are educators of adults. This is a fact we will have to learn to face.

Implications For Future Extension Marketing Programs

The only constructive reason for self criticism is self improvement. Nothing is to be gained from pointing to past faults unless some lessons for the future are gleaned from the fault finding. The fault finding is easy compared with the gleaning for constructive lessons. But, I will outline some of the lessons I have learned and hope that those same lessons will be of some benefit to others with similar responsibilities for extension marketing programs in the future.

Basic changes are needed in development and delivery of extension marketing programs. We need to develop programs that are problem-centered and life-centered with respect to needs and preferences of our clientele. We need to recognize the diversified experience base of our clientele and develop programs that will help them build upon those individual experience levels. And, we need to design and use delivery systems that allow our clientele to determine the time, place and pace of learning, to the maximum practical extent.

Problem-Centered Extension Marketing Programs Producers have problems but universities have departments. This often repeated phrase of criticism contains a valuable lesson. Our university structure is not designed to deal with felt needs of our producers. We could just as easily say that producers have problems and extension economists have specialties. Our extension economics programs generally are not structured to address the problems of our producer clientele. Our producers do not make pure "marketing" decisions. They make business management decisions. Marketing, production, finance and policy all are critical elements in nearly every decision farmers or ranchers make. Yet we extension economists who work with producers are either marketing, farm management or public policy specialists. We can learn to work together as a team, we can broaden our perspectives of our work or we can do both. But, we cannot address the problems of our producers effectively by dealing only with marketing.

Marketing decisions cannot be made in isolation of decisions with respect to production and finance. We assume away our relevance when we assume away the management, finance and policy issues to focus on marketing only. Our producers' marketing problems are interrelated with problems of production, finance and policy. We must deal with our producers' problems, rather than our specialties, if we are to be effective extension educators. Integrated decision making was the subject of a recent national conference for extension economists. Integrated extension programming has been a popular topic on regional extension programs as well. We seem to be trying to move in the right

direction. But, we need to make sure this effort to focus on all economic dimensions of producers' problems is more than a passing fad. We must convert the rhetoric to reality. We must become problem-centered rather than specialty-centered in our producer programs.

Life-Centered Extension Programs Knowles describes the life-centered orientation of adult learners in this way. "They are motivated to learn those things that they experience a need to know or to be able to do in order to cope more effectively with their current or projected life situations." He points out further, however, that we need not wait for nature to produce this readiness to learn. This readiness or life-centered need to learn can be induced. We sometimes can induce this need in an audience, as I am attempting to do with this paper. I hope to develop a life-centered need to change directions in extension marketing programs among those exposed to the ideas in this paper. We likewise can attempt to induce life-centered learning needs in our producer audiences, and then proceed to fill those needs.

However, gaining an audience with producers has become an increasingly difficult task for extension economists. Competition for producers' scarce time has become increasingly keen as the pace of life has quickened, even in rural communities. Producers no longer come to extension meetings to socialize or just to have some place to go. There is less time for socializing and always someplace that a producer needs to be. They must feel a need for an extension program or they will not be there. We can't induce a need in someone unless we first get their attention. We in extension can attempt to create a need for our programs through advance publicity, by direct contact and through mass media. But, we also can respond to "teachable moments" created by circumstances of the times, as frequently reflected in the popular farm press.

Large crowds flocked to extension meetings all across the country to hear about the farm financial crisis and strategies for farm survival during the 1982-83 meeting year. Yet, over half of all farmers have no debt, according to Secretary Block, and probably less than 15% have serious financial difficulties. Among those attending the meetings, those without real financial problems likely outnumbered those in real difficulty by ten-to-one or even more. The point is that a "teachable moment" had been created and producers responded. It was created by widespread press coverage of basic changes in the financial situation and outlook for agriculture in general. Those who capitalized on the teachable moments were able to teach financial management, farm planning, public policy and even marketing strategies to large numbers of producers. Those who took a problem-centered approach to teaching those life-centered audiences were rewarded with impressive program results.

Teachable moments currently exist in several areas related to marketing. Risk management is a popular topic among the more knowledgeable of producers at the present time. Production risks and financial risks can be integrated with market risk in developing problem-centered, decision-oriented programs. Risk management also adapts well to computerized decisions aids, from simple spread sheets to computerized whole-farm risk models. Computer-assisted decision making is another life-centered topic in vogue at present. Any

marketing program that demonstrates the value of computers has a ready audience among the growing number of producers who have, or soon will have, micro computers.

The concept of risk management is not easily communicated by the popular press. So, risk management programs may need to be packaged with more easily recognized life-centered needs for maximum effectiveness. Managing the farm as a business is a teachable topic at present. A MBO-like program that integrates risk management might be a useful vehicle for marketing programs over the next couple of years. But, the "hottest" teachable topic of the next few years could be commodity options. Options markets will get a big play in the farm press when trading starts this fall. A decision-oriented, risk management approach to options would allow us to respond to a teachable moment, to teach basic marketing concepts, and to help producers understand a possible alternative solution to their day-to-day marketing problems.

Teachable moments will come and go. But the basic programming concept remains: we must develop program with life-centered interest and problem-centered content to achieve maximum educational results with adults.

Experience Oriented Program Design and Delivery We deal with people where they are. No basic principle of extension programming is more important than this. We may set prerequisites for specific workshops and programs to avoid repeating basic concepts to more advanced learners. We can design newsletters, factsheets and publications for audiences with specific interests and experiences. In other words, all programs need not serve those at all levels of experience equally well. But, we must make sure our programs are oriented to the experience level of the intended audience. And, we need to ensure the possibility of progress from the most basic to the most sophisticated levels in our overall marketing programs.

Extension is a people oriented institution. We exclude a lot of the people we are charged to include if we assume a high level of marketing expertise for most of our programs. Nowhere is the KISS rule more relevant than in marketing. Few producers know even where to start in developing either their marketing expertise or a marketing program for their farm or ranch. We often are guilty of teaching the pieces of marketing programs without teaching the basics of how the pieces fit together in a marketing plan or strategy. We provide knowledge and expertise without teaching the know-how to generate more profits through effective marketing. We implicitly assume that a producers can work those things out for themselves. We assume too much in most cases.

We can teach producers to hedge, multiple hedge or speculate; to buy a put or sell a call; to forward price or defer price; to basis trade or feed cattle on paper. But, most producers probably need to know the basic steps in making a marketing decision more than they need our sophisticated pricing strategies. How do they develop logical pricing objectives or target price levels? How can they get reasonable estimates of commodity price outlook? How much risk are they facing in markets? What are reasonable estimates of expected production and production variability? How do they develop reasonable estimates of

expected net revenue and potential revenue variability? How do they evaluate even simple cash market alternatives? What are some of the alternatives to cash markets, they are willing and able to use? What is a reasonable marketing strategy or plan for their operation? What is a good marketing decision? How do they decide whether or not they are making progress in solving their marketing problem?

We can't answer all these questions for all producers with every marketing program. But, we need to know what our producer clientele need and want to know and then design educational programs to fit those needs. We have to be willing to deal with producers where they are. We don't have the luxury of dealing only with the things we find interesting and challenging. If we are bored with the KISS rule, we can try the SIP rule: Simplicity Is Power. Take the challenging concepts and make them simple. There is power in the ability to deal with meaningful concepts in simple terms. Regardless, we can't choose to work only with those who are eager and ready to learn what we want to teach. We have to design our programs for the clientele we are charged to serve.

Producer-Directed Extension Program Delivery Systems Time-pressed producers are going to choose the time, place, and pace at which they learn. We can get them to come to the "teachable moment", high-interest type programs at a time and place of our choice. But, they will set the time, place and pace for their more routine information and education activities. They will become informed and learn from our programs only if we conform to those needs. But, one of the most exciting aspects of extension marketing today is the diversity of potential delivery systems. We have the means to deliver producer-directed marketing programs. We will continue to use traditional means such as publications, newsletters, and farm publications. All these methods allow the producer to choose the time, place and pace of learning. But, now we have sophisticated telecommunications systems which greatly expand the potential for producer-directed learning programs of the future.

The farm press probably should be given even higher priority in our marketing programs of the future. We can mix marketing concepts with timely information in attractive packages in newspapers and farm magazines, thus increasing the probability of gaining the attention of busy producers. The slick covers and professional format of a widely distributed magazine also contributes to our perceived credibility. However, we should not overlook the fact that modern reproduction techniques allow us to put together professional looking newsletters at relatively low costs with a quick turnaround. Again with newsletters, the key to success in the future will be to keep them short and simple. We have to fit the needs and time constraints of our logical target audience.

Commercial television provided an excellent media for visibility and credibility through exposure to the mass audiences for short time periods. However, educational television offers better teaching opportunities. Educational TV programs can be longer and targeted to more narrow interest groups. Neither of these media have been user-directed with respect to time and pace. But, growing popularity of video cassette recorders, VCRs, are changing this. VCRs allow producers to record programs for later viewing at any time they choose.

Thus, producers can record programs aired at the unpopular times dedicated to agricultural programs by the commercial channels for viewing at later, more convenient times. Special program series can be aired on educational television at any time over an extended period of time. Interested producers need not miss any segment they choose to tape and view. They can choose the time, place and pace of their learning from television through use of VCRs.

Video cassette recorders also provide great opportunities for producing and distributing video cassettes. We can produce marketing programs and distribute them through our county offices or direct to producers for use at their choice of time, place and pace. We could build county libraries of marketing cassettes to fit various levels of experience on various topics. The client would choose programs to fit his or her need. However, we will have to become more expert in use of this media if we are to use it effectively. We are going to be compared with commercial programming in assessments of our presentations, regardless of the fairness of such comparisons. But, an estimated 10% of all homes now have VCRs and some project over 50% will have them by the end of the decade. Rural families without access to cable TV may buy them at an even faster rate. It is a delivery system we cannot afford to ignore.

Computer-based program delivery systems have great future potential for self-directed learning also. Video-text systems give producers access to tremendous data bases including everything from market commentary to sophisticated systems for charting and data analysis. Our comparative advantage in this area may be in providing information and analysis for the commercial distribution systems. Again as with the farm press, we may choose to wholesale rather than retail many of our computer-based programs. Broadcast video-text is another area in which we can wholesale information, getting it to our clientele on a timely basis. The new satellite-dish TV receiving systems may open even more opportunities for specialized agricultural programming. Competition in long distance telephone service also could cause us to rethink opportunities for the telephone. Telephone recordings are ideal for communication of timely information at the users convenience. And, the list goes on and on.

I will not even attempt to identify all the possibilities for program delivery in the future. Numerous systems are and will be available which will let the user choose the time, place and pace of learning. That is the key issue. If we choose to develop programs that are producer-oriented in delivery, the delivery systems are and will be available. We need not depend on producer meetings for delivery of extension programs of the future. We must delivery programs as educators of adults who are basically self-directed learners.

Summary

We in extension marketing need not be ashamed of our past programs. But, none of us are perfect. We all can learn from negative experiences from our past. Most of us will admit that we have not solved the marketing problems of our producer clientele. Farmers and ranchers, in general, still see themselves as good producers and lousy marketers. Our work is not complete until that basic fact is changed. Our producer clientele need to learn to market as well as they produce.

Our job is to help them achieve that objective.

Misdirections in past programs have hindered our progress. Not all economists will agree with that statement. Judgment is always a personal matter. But, virtual elimination of producer oriented marketing programs in the late 1950s and 1960s was detrimental to the effectiveness of producer marketing programs in the 1970s. Maybe the pay-off in more marketing firm work was justified. But, the later shift back to producer programs indicates it probably was not. Our other basic misdirection has been our emphasis on outlook programs that fail to meet the needs of our producer clientele. I quite likely have spent as many frustrating hours on outlook as anyone over the past 10 years. We have done some things right and have created a lot of visibility for extension through outlook programs. But, in many ways we have missed the mark of effective extension programming. Our outlook programs in general have not met the basic criteria of effective adult education. We need not be ashamed of our past record in outlook. But, we can do better in the future by learning from our past mistakes.

The basic fact we have failed to face in extension marketing is that we are educators of adults. We need not take the teaching of adult education experts on faith in our program development. We can look to our past programs. Our successes have come when we have followed the basic principles of educational programming for adults. Our failures come when we fail to recognize either that our primary role is education or that our clientele are adults rather than college kids. Educational programs for adults should be life-centered, problem-centered, experience-oriented and self-directed. The more closely we adhere to these principles the greater our probability of success.

We have opportunities to utilize these basic principles in many producer marketing program areas today. Even more opportunities will be presented in the future. Many of us have used some or all of these basic principles for years in some of our programs. Many of us are orienting some of our programs at present toward sound concepts of educational programming for producers. But, we need to use these basic concepts consistently in all our programs. We need to discard programs that are misdirected and ineffective. We need to replace them with programs that meet the educational needs of our clientele.

We could recite for hours from our past successes and the things we have done right. We can learn from past success. And, we all should take time to pat ourselves on the back now and then. But, we can learn from past failures also. Some may be satisfied with their past successes. Most of us, however, know that we could have done better. We even know how we could have done better. We do not need to be taught nearly so much as we need to be reminded. A look at our past can serve as a reminder for the future. I have not tried to teach in this paper. I have tried to remind. In that way, lessons from the past can lead to better extension marketing programs in the future.

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