

Ensuring Extension Is Highly Valued

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“I think we may safely say that the past in ...extension has been fruitful...I would guess that we will continue to have ...extension as long as the taxpayer can be convinced it serves a useful purpose.”

Rex Beresford

Extension Specialist, Iowa State University

Presented at American Society of Animal Production

November, 1950

Ensuring That Ag. Extension Is Useful

- How do we do that?
 - Useful to whom?
 - Defining Extension clientele
 - Identify new(er) underserved audiences?
 - Refocus efforts on agricultural roots?
 - Does serving one of these audiences necessarily come at the expense of the other?

Focusing On Highly Valued Activities

1. Applied research & information delivery
2. Intensive educational efforts
3. Extensive educational activities

Source: Stephen Amosson,
Journal of Agricultural & Applied Economics, 2006

Serving Diverse Audiences Requires New Responses

- How does Extension do a good job of serving
 - small farms
 - SARE
 - Organic producers
 - Commercial agriculture producers
 - Purdue's new *Commercial Agriculture Center* is one approach

Local Program Delivery Very Important

- Local Extension staff integral to program delivery
 - Key to Extension partnership
 - Local, state, federal
 - Front door to University
 - In touch with local people
 - Know local conditions

Specialization Is Critical

“It simply is not possible for a generalist to provide the up-to-date technical information needed by modern specialized producers.”

Source: Zmolek & Foster,
Journal of Animal Science, 1983

The Path to Specialization

- Allow county staff to identify intersection of
 1. important needs in their community
 2. subjects they are passionate about
- Strengthen professional development
 - more intensive than in the past
 - developed by “teams” of specialists & county staff
- Stronger Integration of Research & Extension

“Extension cannot focus just on being valuable, it also needs to make sure people know how valuable it is.

. . .it's not the number of people who are for or against you that matters; it's the number of people who will take action on their views that matters.”

Dana Hoag
2005 WAEA Presidential Address

Extension's Success in Future

- Key will be strong programming
 - Requires more specialization by county staff
- Garnering & maintaining support for
 - Extension requires delivery of strong programs locally
 - Land Grant Universities requires strong Extension program

Challenges

- Strengthening Partnership with Counties
 - Deliver programs clientele value highly
 - Encourage county staff to
 - Specialize & deliver programs regionally
 - High quality programming strengthens partnership!
- Changing professional development
 - More intensive & developed in a “team” framework
 - Need more resources for professional development

Challenge to AAEA

- What is AAEA’s role in professional development for county Extension staff?
 - Historically v. little involvement
 - Needs to change
- Program needs & expertise cross state lines
 - Many opportunities for development opportunities
- Program cost needs to be considered