

# Careers.com AG & FOOD CAREER GUIDE

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#### **WELCOME TO THE AGCAREERS.COM AG & FOOD CAREER GUIDE!**

AgCareers.com is "Feeding the World with Talent" by connecting top talent with agricultural employers across the globe. The Ag & Food Career Guide is just one way we are helping young professionals familiarize themselves and connect with some of the top organizations in agriculture and food.

Within the Career Guide you'll find a variety of employers and organizations offering opportunities for students and young professionals. Plus, don't miss out on the vast career education and advice featured within the articles in the publication. This Guide is a great resource to help lead you from the job search to assimilating in a new role and everything in between.

Be sure to sign up for the Student Career Success Kit from AgCareers.com (details on page 36). We'll keep in touch with additional helpful resources throughout your career journey. Finally, visit www.AgCareers.com to start your career adventure today! Best of luck to you!

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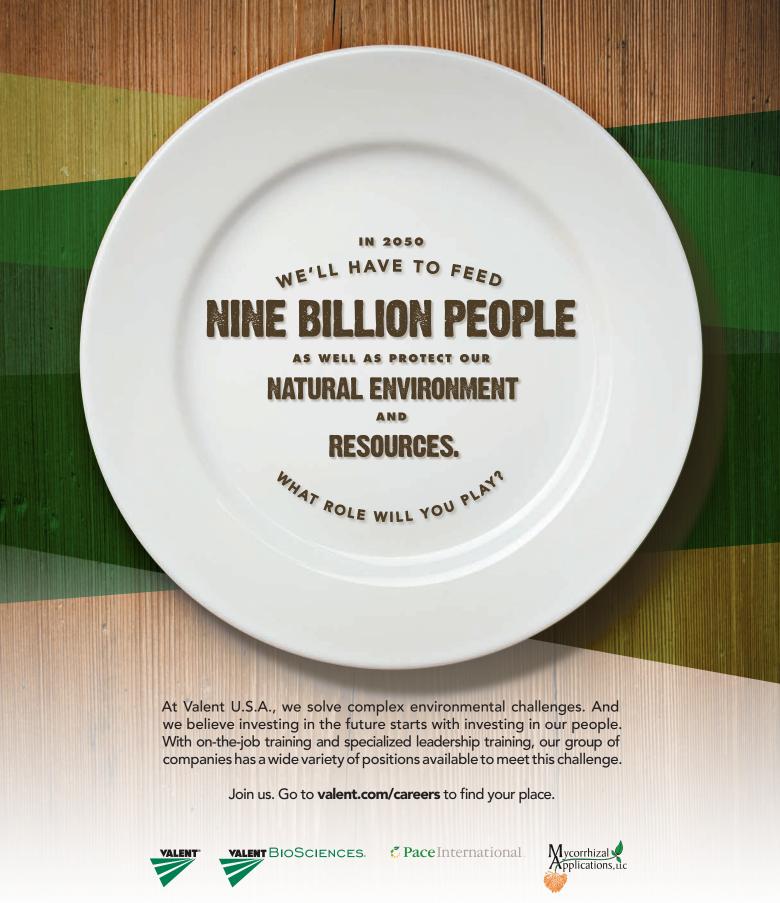
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#### WHAT AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist with help from Kate Boeckenstedt, AgCareers.com Marketing Intern

IF YOU WANT A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE, you'll want to impress agricultural employers specifically. Because employers in the realm of agriculture, food, and natural resources seek a slightly specialized set of skills and qualities, we wanted to provide you with a bit of insight into what agricultural employers are looking for today, straight from the source.



ITFRRA SELENA HAINES Director, HR Business **Partners** 



**GARY JOHNSON Executive Director of Sales** 



Titanpro **RUSTY HARDER** Chief Marketing Officer

#### UNIVERSAL SKILLS & QUALITIES

The main skills and qualities would be customer focus; strong communication and team effectiveness; drive for continuous improvement; having a safety mindset, and possessing business acumen.

The biggest attribute we are looking for is grit. The ability to keep persevering even during difficult times. Additionally, having great follow-up skills and the ability to connect with customers is critical.

We look for transferable skills when evaluating potential candidates. A prospective employee should be professional, have a good work ethic, be a team player, and possess strong communication and leadership skills.

#### AGRICULTURE-SPECIFIC SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

It is an advantage to have knowledge of the agricultural industry, but not always necessary. You should always make sure that you are prepared and have the base **knowledge** of the role to achieve the task that you are applying to.

Being able to relate to the farmer. Our salespeople that have come from a farming background, do great calling on farmers because they can speak their language and understand their needs.

An employee should have a good understanding of how to provide agronomic support to growers. It is also essential to be proactive in business planning and marketing in order to plan for success.

#### TIPS TO BOOST NEEDED SKILL SETS

Ensure you are an active listener and understand the goals and tasks that are put in place for you to meet. Don't be afraid to ask questions and if it is something you have never tackled before, look into what resources and people are there to support you through your first attempt at it.

For the most part, young workers are great today but social skills are not as good as they should be, following up in writing (i.e. hand written notes of thank you), looking people in the eye, and being consistent are all areas that could use some improvement. Always be learning. If you are not growing, you are slowing.

Continuing to learn and gain knowledge about agriculture as it continues to innovate is highly recommended. More specifically, taking classes focused on agronomy, precision ag, public speaking, and business would be beneficial in order to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to increase value. AG

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An organization's employee value proposition goes beyond the minimums to describe what that employer offers if you choose employment at their organization. You may be able to glean an overall theme from the organization's mission and vision statement. The employment value proposition may also be shared in the job posting, on the employer's website, during the interview, in an employee handbook, and/or in the job offer. Employers could include the following in their proposition of value to potential employees:

#### • ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Career development plans, leadership development and trainee programs, coaching, promote-from-within.

#### • SUSTAINABILITY & STEWARDSHIP:

Environmental initiatives, natural resource conservation, meeting the needs of a growing world.

#### • DIVERSITY & INCLUSION:

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), affinity groups, veteran programs, policies and training.

- MENTORING: Formal or informal mentoring programs, pipeline for sharing experience and knowledge with new employees.
- LIFELONG LEARNING: Continued education and training, tuition reimbursement, scholarships, employee development initiatives.
- COMMUNITY SERVICE: Time-off for volunteering, company-wide initiatives, nonprofit and charitable contributions, social responsibilities, support of humanitarian causes.

- HEALTH & WELLNESS: Work-life balance, on-site facilities, gym membership, vaccination programs, employee assistance programs which provide confidential counseling and advice services.
- COMPANY CULTURE: The atmosphere inside an organization. Value placed on relationships vs. products & services. Flexibility options.
- VALUE THE POSITION BRINGS TO THE EMPLOYER: How the position fits into the overall organization and what/ how you'll contribute to success, how performance will be measured, recognition received.
- EMPLOYER BRAND: Employment of industry experts, award-winners, and high-achievers. Familiarity with the employer's brand, including product and services, and general impressions.

What may be valuable to one person, may be utterly unimpressive to another. It's vital for you to review all possible employer offerings and determine what's really on your "musthave list". AG

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**EXCERPT FROM AN** ACTUAL AGCAREERS.COM **JOB POSTING** 

#### **CONSIDERING A JOB OFFER**

Job offers are a legal document; think carefully about it before signing on the dotted line. You may be excited and ready to accept right away, but at least contemplate it overnight. You may even ask for up to a week to decide, but please be cognizant of an employer's timeline.

#### CONTINGENCIES

The job offer could include contingent conditions or exceptions that could arise if they discover findings that might hinder your ability to do the job. Examples of job offer contingencies may include background checks, motor vehicle reports, drug testing, health screening, reference checks, employment verification, license/ certification obtainment, degree completion, all as permissible by law.

#### AT-WILL

Don't be alarmed if the employer's documents indicate that you are being offered "at-will employment." The U.S. is one of only a few countries where employment is mostly at-will (with a few limitations). At-will means your employer can terminate you at any time, for any reason, if it's not illegal. It also means that you can guit at any time. This can seem a bit harsh to a new job seeker, but just be aware it's part of the U.S. labor law in most states.

This article is not legal advice and is for guidance only. Check with your legal counsel, U.S. Department of Labor, or your state's division of labor for the most relevant and up-to-date information.



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To find out more, and see how you can make a difference, check out **chsinc.com/careers**.



ARE YOU INTERESTED in applying for several positions but scared that you won't stand out? The first thing you must understand is that a generic resume won't cut it. Having a solid and customized resume is key to move on to the next stage of the hiring process. Most job seekers claim they do not have time to put together or update their resume for one job let alone every job they are applying for, but it is vital when thinking about making a job change. Taking extra time crafting a customized resume will pay off in the end.

It takes about 10 seconds for the employer or hiring manager to scan your resume and decide if you are qualified or not, so standing out is a must. Most often, we do not get a chance to speak with the hiring manager before we apply for the position, so it is important to take time analyzing the job description, picking out keywords and building your resume. Finding the right words and phrases to sum up your education, experience and skills is not always simple, but if you keep these things in mind, it doesn't have to be overwhelming!

#### UNDERSTANDING THE JOB **DESCRIPTION**

Before you even think about touching your resume, you must first read and understand the job description. Once you read through the job description, read it again, but this time take note of the job title, duties/responsibilities, and requirements. As you do this, pick out

keywords and phrases that stand out. I would recommend highlighting or underlining these keywords or phrases in the job description or even listing them out. Understanding the job description will also help you craft a perfect objective, if you choose to include one in your resume, by aligning your personal career objectives with key points from the job description.

#### **KEYWORDS AND PHRASES**

Once you have picked out the keywords and phrases, start organizing your education and experience and match them up with the key phrase and use similar language. Having similar language is important because the hiring manager will be able to pick those words and phrases out much easier than generic wording. Make sure you are careful with your word choice, this does not mean copy and pasting the job description in your resume. As you analyze the job description and pick out keywords, you may come across keywords or experience needed that you had left out of the previous version of your resume, so take some time to think through all your experience and its relevance to the current job you are working on.

#### **BE CONCISE**

There is nothing worse than a cluttered resume and that is one of the first things the viewer will notice. Don't be afraid to combine your experiences and skills. For example, if you worked for a company but held several different positions, instead of listing them individually, list them together or just pick the highest-level position. If you have skills that aren't relevant to the job in which you are applying, feel free to leave them out. This way, the hiring manager is not taking time reading over things that are not important and skipping the skills that are.

#### **DON'T EXAGGERATE**

Even though you are picking out keywords and using similar language, it does not mean your resume should be exaggerated. Make sure your education, experience, and skills give an accurate depiction of your background and don't get too carried away. You might make it to the interview round because of an impressive resume but once you get to the interview, it may be hard to back up what was written on the resume.

#### **GET CREATIVE**

Think outside of the box when writing down your skills and experience. Take extra time to think and evaluate your past experiences. That one undergraduate research project, volunteer opportunity or even part-time job in college might come in handy someday and become relevant to a job you are applying for.

Following these steps when generating a customized resume cannot guarantee you the job, but it will sure put you a step in the right direction and even ahead of other applicants. AG





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### INSIDE THE JOB INTERVIEW

by Kristi Sproul, AgCareers.com Education & Marketing Specialist

without question, one of the most unnerving parts of the job seeking journey is the interview. For most, it's the uncertainty of what to expect during the interview that gives them the jitters. Interview types can vary by employer and even with all the practice questions available, there's no way to know exactly what to expect.

You've likely heard the standard advice to arrive early, come prepared with questions and highlight your experiences. While these tips are certainly on point, we wanted to dig deeper by getting insight from employers about how they score interviews. How much does experience really matter? What are red flags? What makes an interview exceptional?

To get the inside scoop on job interviews we reached out to Julie Venierakis, Senior Director of Human Resources and General Services for Valent U.S.A and Dustin DeVries, Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition for Zoetis. Julie has been involved with hiring new talent for over 20 years! Dustin accepted his current role at Zoetis in 2017 and has over 17 years' experience of managing employees and seeking out top talent.

What do you notice first when meeting an interview candidate?

**JULIE:** Initially, we notice if the candidate has arrived on time, maintains eye contact, openness, if they are smiling and engaged.

**DUSTIN:** The first thing I notice is the candidate's attention to detail. A candidate who arrives early and has followed the details outlined in the interview confirmation creates a positive first impression. The second thing that I notice is the delivery of the candidate's initial introduction, to not only the interviewer(s), but to other staff they encounter during their time in the office. When a candidate seizes every opportunity to genuinely make a new connection, they stand out from the crowd.

Takeaway: Arrive early, follow instructions and strive to make connections.

If the candidate has previously submitted their resume electronically, do you expect them to bring a printed copy to the interview?

**JULIE:** No, not really, but I do expect that the candidate completes an application if provided prior to the interview. Providing reference information is also important.

**DUSTIN:** Yes. When candidates bring fresh copies of their resume and provide it to the interviewer without being prompted, it demonstrates that they have proactively prepared for the meeting.

Takeaway: It doesn't hurt to be prepared, so bring printed copies.

Do you expect the candidate to shake the hand of each interviewer?

JULIE: Absolutely.

**DUSTIN:** Candidates who take the time upfront to acknowledge each interviewer with a handshake and a brief "thank you" for their time will always differentiate themselves. However, sometimes this can be logistically difficult given the room set-up. In instances like this, a brief statement of thanks works just as well.

Takeaway: Make the effort to shake each person's hand if the room set-up allows.

During the interview how can recent college graduates distinguish themselves from several other candidates who may also have a long list of campus involvement, but a shorter list of practical job experience?

**JULIE:** If the candidate can explain examples of the application of skills learned in school or specific classes and leadership roles that directly link to the job opportunity. Also, we look for candidates that can demonstrate strong soft skills, relationship building, teaming with others, leading projects, working with teams from diverse cultures, ages, countries, etc.

**DUSTIN:** Recent college graduates who focus on their relative accomplishments

and specifically, how they achieved those accomplishments, rather than just sharing a list of activities, always stand out. It's critical that candidates are prepared to share specific situations, the actions they took while navigating the situation and then ultimately, the outcome of their actions. The more specific a candidate can be in describing his or her experience, the more memorable they will be.

Takeaway: Provide specific examples when explaining your experiences.

What type of responses from the candidate are red flags to you?

**JULIE:** If the candidate's resume or application notes a specific skill or competency and when asked to share an example, the candidate is unable to explain and or provide an example to support the information.

**DUSTIN:** A red flag to me is when a candidate is asked to give a specific example, but instead provides a hypothetical response. Additionally, responses that lack depth or specifics regarding accomplishments/outcomes are always a red flag.

Takeaway: Provide specific examples when explaining your experiences (sound familiar?).

What question do you wish candidates would ask more often in interviews?

**JULIE:** I recommend asking more questions about a typical day in the office and to ask about the company culture and work team. I also think it would be a good idea to understand what is expected in the first 30, 60, and 90 days. It also helps the candidate to

understand expectations by asking what would be considered an "outstanding employee".

**DUSTIN:** Candidates that have networked and researched, both internally with current employees as well as externally within the industry, will separate themselves from other candidates. Those that can share insights gained during their research, and then ask the interviewers for their perspective on those insights, create a positive exchange of information during the interview which is valuable for both employer and candidate. Candidates that are able to ask relevant questions which show the work they've already put into learning about the position, the company, the industry and the customers will always learn more and the interviewer will learn more about them.

Takeaway: Don't miss out on the opportunity to learn more about the organization and the specific role, while also showing the interviewer that you've done your homework.

How much emphasis do you place on candidates post-interview follow-up?

**JULIE:** It is critical to immediately write a thank you note and follow up within the next few days. It is also important to share why they want the job and emphasize the skills and competencies that align with the role.

**DUSTIN:** Candidate follow-up is important. It provides a glimpse into how the candidate may behave as an employee, both with internal stakeholders and with customers and vendors. Candidates who follow-up throughout the interview process always make a good impression.

Takeaway: Make post-interview follow-up a priority.

Try to recall the best interview you've been a part of. What made this candidate interview exceptional?

JULIE: Some of the most exceptional interview experiences that I have observed include the candidate's ability to provide recent examples of experience, education or projects that meet the qualifications of the role. Candidates that provide succinct and honest responses to questions. Candidates that describe their ability to navigate change, resolve technical challenges and help others.

**DUSTIN:** I've had the privilege of participating in many high-quality interviews over the years. The most exceptional candidates did the following: took initiative to prepare, which created a strong two-way dialogue; listened carefully to questions and shared specific experiences that were meaningful and relevant to the role; identified hiring manager's needs as they asked questions then tailored their responses to show how they could bring value to the position and the organization; proactively asked the hiring manager what the next steps were in the interview process; expressed sincere interest in the role; and followed-up that day with individual notes to each interviewer.

Takeaway: Relate specific experiences to the role you're interviewing for. Also, describe how your employability (soft) skills will add value to the organization.

As you prepare for your next interview, review this article and determine how you will be able to deliver on Julie and Dustin's advice! **AG** 

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NHATYOU DON'T HAVE!

by Erika Osmundson, AgCareers.com Director of Marketing & Communications

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS,** coping skills, time management skills...the list seems to go on and on when employers talk about young professionals entering the work world. But, most of what is claimed to be a problem with 'this' generation, are the same shortcomings of those that came before at this stage in their lives.

It is time to change the conversation from what we don't have to what we do have! Let's start with identifying the skills that young professionals need to develop and determine ways to enhance opportunities to hone those skills. Then let's figure out how to demonstrate your achievements in those key areas.

#### WHAT SKILLS EMPLOYERS WANT

AgCareers.com recently conducted a survey (2017 - 2018 Intern and New Graduate Hiring & Compensation Report) with employers regarding intern and new graduates. One focus area of this study was the importance of employability skill sets in the workplace for interns and new graduates. There are many studies out there around this topic, if you are interested in exploring. The results of the AgCareers.com survey aligned with what can be found in many of those reports.

This study looked at 10 key employability skills and asked employers to rank their importance as they looked at candidates for hire. The next section will dive into some of the top employability skills listed and how to develop and demonstrate these.

#### DEVELOPING & DEMONSTRATING THESE SKILLS

#### **Teamwork**

Given youth involvement in activities, sports, church, etc., it is hard to believe that most interns and new graduates wouldn't have some experience with teamwork. On campus there are plenty of opportunities to be a part of a team – projects, organizations, intramurals, you name it! Get involved!

The challenge is that during an interview, we get so focused on showing the interviewer what we can do that we

rarely highlight our ability to be a productive team member unless specifically asked. Keep this in mind as you practice your interview question responses. Craft a few responses to not only demonstrate your accolades but successes of teams that you've been a part of and your role within that team. Find balance here, don't go extreme with the team talk, but demonstrate your teamwork abilities.

#### **Verbal Communication**

We could probably argue that this one has changed over time, with email and text and all the other fun social media platforms. There are so many other ways to communicate that do sometimes seem easier, but let's face it, can be less effective in many scenarios. The best way to develop verbal skills is just to practice and make sure you don't fall back on your electronic communication too much. Get out there - network, talk to friends, take a class that requires you to present, take a leadership role within a club, pick up the phone and call your grandma. Talk properly. Not like you'd text or shoot the breeze with a friend. Think professional! The more you do it, the more you hone those skills. And the nice thing is that,

if you do the practice, those will shine through in your interview!

While we are here, let's just touch on written communication, since it isn't too far down the list. Biggest pet peeves heard from employers are that employees write like they text/too casual and that they choose an electronic form of communication when a phone call or in-person conversation would be more efficient. Know when to take an online conversation to in-person. Also, take a writing course or volunteer to write for your school publication to help enhance your writing skills. Demonstrate your good writing skills in your emails back and forth with the employer throughout the recruitment process. If appropriate for the role, take samples of your writing to the interview.

#### **Problem-Solving & Decision-Making**

This is a tough one, because it isn't that young professionals do not have experience in these two areas, it is just a lack of applicable experience a lot of times, or so it may seem. Obviously, internships provide a wonderful growing opportunity in these two areas. But what about interviewing for that first internship when you've had little experience? Don't worry, you have experiences from class projects, parttime jobs, clubs/organizations, etc. You just need to apply them!

This relates no matter the role, but is particularly helpful when you have little experience to draw upon. It isn't about the specific problem or outcome - it is about the process you took to get to your answer. Rather than just sharing a situation and what the result was of your decision, take the interviewer on a quick journey through your process. How did you identify the problem? What did you assess? Did you get input from others? How many solutions did you consider?

How was the decision ultimately made? And then, what was the outcome? It is more about your ability to work through a problem and make a decision than the decision itself!

#### "ADULTING"

We are going to take a break from the list of skills from the survey and highlight one that has been coming up more and more in employer conversations these days. No, "adulting" is not an official term. The reference is to young professional's inability to keep the personal stuff from getting tangled and mixed with the professional stuff. This is a slippery slope as the line between work life and personal life has gotten fuzzy, with the introduction of technology and even

TALK PROPERLY. **NOT LIKE YOU'D** OR SHOOT THE **BREEZE WITH A** FRIEND.

employer expectations. On the flip side it also has led to employers offering more flexibility in the workplace, which is awesome, but also leads to some gray areas. Here is some simple advice to address common gripes from employers.

- Expect to be at the office from 8 to 5 daily unless directly instructed that hours are different. Yes, this means you stay even when projects are completed. Ask for something more to do.
- Don't use your personal phone during the day to text or talk for non-work purposes. This also applies to personal social media usage. Use your lunch time

to take care of these needs. Many employers are more lenient on this, so if you are questioning, ask your supervisor.

- It is good to build relationships with co-workers, but until that relationship is established, keep the conversations on the positive side. Your co-workers don't need to know all the serious stuff going on in vour life!
- If you have a problem with something/ someone, deal with it. Try to work it out with that person. If that is unsuccessful, talk with your supervisor/mentor. Don't waste time spreading negative vibes and gossiping with others.
- Be financially responsible. Your finances can impact you at work. You may need to carry a personal credit card for travel expenses that you get reimbursed for. Being able to hold that line of credit is crucial. Don't expect your employer to make decisions based on your financial needs. Raises, bonuses and such are typically based on company performance, not need.
- Understand that it takes time to climb the ladder. Building your experience and proving your value happens with time. Express your interest in advancement, but couple that with asking about ways to grow your knowledge base to better position you for advancement. Do those things and be patient. Leadership and authority are earned, not given.

Again, let's quit focusing on what we supposedly don't have and more on what we do. Knowing what employers expect or are seeking is half the battle. You have these skills or at least the framework. Grow, learn, look for opportunities! You have what it takes! AG



#### What is AgExplorer?

A career exploration website that is a robust, comprehensive resource to help students explore the broad range of careers in agriculture.

#### FFA Prepares Students for a Future in Agriculture!

With our need to feed an ever-growing population, we must provide FFA members with opportunities to engage and envision themselves in agriculture. As a result, the National FFA Organization, Discovery Education and AgCareers.com have partnered to create AgExplorer.



Help us spread the word and give students the chance to find their future in agriculture. Visit *http://bit.ly/AgExplorerSF* to learn more.



by Kate Boeckenstedt, AgCareers.com Marketing Intern

#### **KEEPING UP WITH THE LATEST**

technology trends can be difficult. However, staying up to date with the newest advancements in agriculture technology can be even more challenging. According to National Geographic, there will be nine billion people on Earth to feed by 2050. So what is the importance of digital agriculture?

A major factor in digital agriculture has been the technology of precision farming. Farmers all across the nation now have the capability to install electric drives for changing populations on the fly, seed meters for plant spacing and downforce of applied pressure to maintain the perfect seeding depth and uniform emergence. As well as a new tool for planters added to the market this year that provides feedback information on the soil's organic content and overall cleanliness of the seed trench. With the utilization of agriculture data systems like precision farming or autosteer, farmers can plant straight rows and ensure there is no significant gaps or overlaps of the crop rows in their fields. The advancements of technology in the agriculture field allow farmers to produce more efficiently.

It used to be extremely difficult to manage data and companies struggled to find a universal system that was

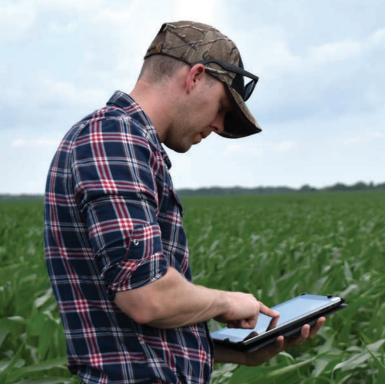
compatible with all brands of machinery. The data has now been modified to store all information in one system. All of the information used to be stored in a tower and now it is all in the cloud. The cloud allows the farmers access to their data at all times and they do not have to manually download it from the tractor and transfer it onto a hard drive. James Jordan, a GPS professor at Kirkwood Community College, thinks one of the next big things for digital agriculture will be automated prescriptions that will make recommendations for seeding, fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides and fungicides.

Another piece of technology that is beginning to play a key role in digital agriculture is the utilization of drones. Jordan says, "The hardware is currently ahead of the science." The drones have so many capabilities but there are currently not enough solutions for what to do with the data. Someday drones will be a new piece to the puzzle of providing daily, weekly and monthly images of each field. Those pictures will validate the progression of how the crops are maturing and knowing how weather, diseases and pests are impacting it. As well as developing an actionable plan of what to do with the pictures and information. Jordan also thinks

crowdsourcing data in the agriculture industry is upcoming. This application allows farmers to upload their data to a network and benchmark what other farmers in a certain area are getting for an average yield.

Agriculture companies are even working to develop solar-powered robots that can spray and weed fields. The robots are still in the development stage but are being tested in several parts of the world. The robot is designed to distinguish weeds from crops and zap the weeds with herbicide. Studies suggest that these robots could interfere with the multi-billion dollar industry of genetically modified plants and herbicide sales since the robots are only designed to spray herbicide as needed. The robots are currently being designed for fields planted with vegetables and cotton. Eventually, within the next five years, there is expected to be a robot designed to spray soybean fields.

AgCareers.com has a wide array of careers in the digital agriculture field. Jobs posted on the site vary from Data Scientists, Precision Technology Specialist, Precision Agriculture Sales, Drone Pilot, Process and Technology Analyst, Research and Development Manager, **Technical Agronomist and Custom** Applicator Data Analyst. AG











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knowing the success of a venture is entirely on one's shoulders pushes people to invest more of who they are into what they do. This is likely why many driven, creative individuals are drawn to the idea of entrepreneurship. Yet, starting a company isn't for everyone, and there are plenty of projects that are better accomplished by an established team. Is there a way to harness the creative energy and drive of personal ownership within the structure of an already-existing company?

#### **BLOOMING WHERE PLANTED**

Intrapreneurialism is a word of increasing popularity. As the need for innovation in companies grows, so has the interest in harnessing the entrepreneurial mindset within existing companies and roles.

"Intrapreneurialism is a concept we've believed in at Agriculture Future of America for the last two decades," said Mark Stewart, AFA president and CEO. "While building transformational leaders in food and agriculture, we foster this intrapreneurial spirit. Our founders would call it, 'blooming where you are planted' or 'rising the tide."

At the heart of it, an intrapreneurial mindset acknowledges that you get out

of every position and situation what you put into it. Since 1996, AFA has seen many alumni take this concept to heart.

#### **PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE**

Jake Worcester, CEO of the Kansas 4-H Foundation, was a student at the first AFA Leaders Conference, AFA's flagship leader development experience. Since then, he has continued his involvement with the organization in a variety of ways as a participant, a staff member, a speaker and now a facilitator for the capstone experience at Conference – Track 4 focused around lifelong learning.

"Early on, I saw folks from the industry engaged with AFA asking and encouraging young people to come to the table looking to create value, innovate and do things differently," he said.

Later as a member of the AFA staff,
Worcester had a conversation with AFA
founder, Sandy Kemper, that influenced
his approach to intrapreneurialism further.
When Worcester approached Kemper,
who is an entrepreneur in his own right,
about a situation he saw happening
in rural America, Kemper suggested
Worcester look for a solution himself.

"Sandy said, 'What do you think? Go prove it.' He told me to come back and

discuss how we could do something like that. Since then, that's how I approach those types of conversations with folks that I've looked up to," Worcester said. Today, Worcester always brings a possible theory backed by research when asking for feedback rather than asking for a solution.

Another AFA alum, Emily Peters, had that creative entrepreneurial spark, but didn't think about using it within a company until her involvement with AFA.

"Learning about intrapreneurialism at AFA helped me see I could take ownership for the benefit of the company and still utilize entrepreneurial skills," said Peters, agriculture sales lead for Union Pacific Railroad.

Peters has been with Union Pacific since graduating from The Ohio State University seven years ago. In that time, she has pursued and taken on a variety of intrapreneurial projects she wouldn't have been able to accomplish otherwise. These ventures have involved transport of food and fuel into Mexico.

"We were opening a brand-new market in a different country with a different culture. There were so many things we had to learn and understand," she said. "It was a benefit to do this within Union Pacific because we had a great legal team, a great sales team in Mexico that knew the market and a great marketing team. It was a huge project."

Peters believes in intrapreneurialism so strongly, she wanted to create a path for everyone at Union Pacific to suggest new business ideas. Similar to her exporting projects, Peters worked with a team to create a process for marketing and sales employees to anonymously suggest new business ideas and vote on their favorite ones. Top ideas are pitched to the company's leadership.

"Not only is Union Pacific getting great ideas, other people are exercising their entrepreneurial skill sets in an intrapreneurial way. We have received feedback from people that they feel more confident and appreciate the exposure to executive leadership and real-time feedback," she said.

#### STAYING MOTIVATED

For Worcester, intrapreneurialism is all about mindset. Whether working for a large or small organization, he believes you can pursue intrapreneurialism by looking for ways to add more value. In fact, he likes to look at each day in his job as a one-day contract.

"At the end of the day ask yourself, 'did I do enough today to get hired again tomorrow?' Hopefully more days than not you say yes," he said. "If you start looking at your job as something that someone owes you, it can be bad for you psyche. Instead if we look at it as, 'I have a lot to offer, but this organization has something I need as well. For this relationship to work, I have to add value to the organization."

The ability to accept your ideas might fail is another mindset important to intrapreneurialism, Peters says.

"Be prepared and do your research, but don't be too hard on yourself if an idea doesn't work." she said. "You should be comfortable with failure. If you're never failing, you're probably not taking enough risks."

Sometimes an idea you suggest might not have the opportunity to fail because it's dismissed early in the process. When this happens, Worcester suggests taking a step back and trying to understand why the idea wasn't considered.

"Recognize when an idea is dismissed, the person dismissing it has information or a perspective you don't have. If you knew what it was, you might better understand even if you don't completely agree. Ask them to help you understand what it is about this idea that they don't think will work. Of course, the other piece of that is some level of humility. Every once in a while, I come up with a really bad idea and someone should say, 'No," he said laughing.

#### FINDING INSPIRATION

When you are in the same environment for a while, it can be easy to slip into your to-do list and not pursue innovation. To avoid this, Peters suggests scheduling time to think creatively.

"There are always tasks and things to be done," she said. "It's important to plan some strategic thinking time and to take action on it. Put it on your calendar and turn off any distractions."

Worcester says he finds inspiration when he is actively pursuing learning whether through his own curiosity or pursuing formal personal and professional development opportunities.

"Any time you turn your learning muscles on, you generate ideas that may not be related to the thing that you're working on but come because you're working your brain in a different manner."

Both Peters and Worcester agree that intrapreneurial effort will be attractive to companies that want to innovate. AG

#### Questions to Ask in an Interview

If you're looking forward to exercising your intrapreneurial skill sets in a new job, it's good to investigate how intrapreneurialism is viewed and rewarded within potential companies. Here are a few questions to consider asking when you interview:

- What is the role of everyone on the team when it comes to finding new solutions?
- What happens when the team hits a road block?
- What's the most interesting problem that you didn't expect that you've solved recently?
- "Asking questions like these will get you a better picture of what the real perspective is rather than asking, 'Do you encourage innovation?' It's easy to say they do, but you want to know what it looks like when you're actually in it." -Jake Worcester, Kansas 4-H Foundation
- What are the career path opportunities within this company?
- "As an entrepreneur, you become better the more experiences you have. The same thing is true of intrapreneurialism. The more roles you try, the more you will develop your intrapreneurial skills." -Emily Peters, Union Pacific Railroad

Ask guestions of both team leaders and those who will be your peers. Don't just take one person's word for it.

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#### For faculty

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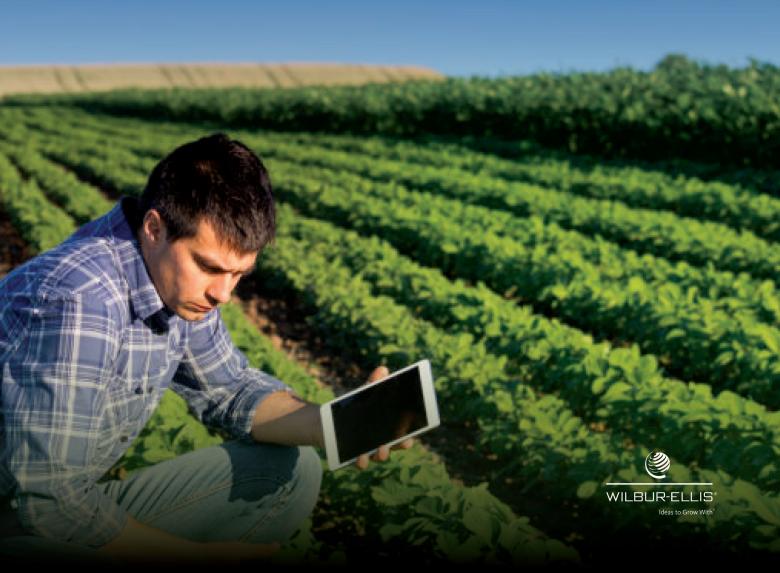
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# AGYOCATE

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist



AGRICULTURE: something that means so much to so very few. Keegan Kautzky, Director of National Education Programs for the World Food Prize Foundation, posed an excellent question at the 2016 AgCareers.com Ag & Food HR Roundtable: "Agriculture is key to solving the world's greatest problems, and it is not revered as it should be. How do we change that narrative?"

Those who work in agriculture or aspire to, know the countless benefits it produces and the fulfillment it brings. Because those of us who are employed by the industry are so passionate about it, it can be difficult to have an effective conversation with an individual that doesn't understand agriculture without emotions getting involved. How can we set the record straight? How can we encourage others to pursue agriculture as we have (and we so desperately need others too as well) when they are uninterested or misinformed?

Treat this AgCareers.com Ag & Food Career Guide as your toolkit for being an Agvocate. Understand why it is important and beneficial to advocate for both the agricultural industry and agricultural careers, how to go about advocating, and the best resources for sharing agriculture with others.

#### WHY AGVOCATE

Have you ever overheard conversations that made you wonder if more people today think their food comes from the grocery store than the farm? Or have you had someone tell you that your favorite food is not okay to eat because of the chemicals or antibiotics they've been "contaminated" with?

"Most of today's population is at least three generations removed from the farm, yet we have seen an influx in interest in the food we eat," said Riley Pagett, Director of Advocacy and Government Relations for the National FFA Organization. "We know that when this

heightened interest arises after quite literally generations of disconnect from the farm and food business, more consumers make grocery store decisions based on the picture of farming and food that is painted for them by misinformed special interest groups."

Misconceptions about food and farming can be dangerous, as they spread quickly and threaten the reputation and well-being of the agricultural industry. Negative opinions and false information can lead to both legal and economic issues.

Furthermore, agriculture being cast in a negative light can be attributed to the very real agricultural labor shortage. A 2016 study by Purdue University found that in that year alone, "an average of 35,400 new U.S. graduates with expertise in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, or the environment are expected to fill 61% of the expected 57,900 average annual openings."

"It is important that agricultural professionals advocate for food and agriculture because it's not only where we work, but it's something we believe in," Pagett said. "If we are not telling our story or advocating for ourselves, someone else will—and unfortunately, we might not like it. Advocating for food and agriculture is crucial always, but especially in a time when so much misinformation is so readily spread in the public square."

#### **APPROPRIATE APPROACHES**

It's easy to get worked up about negative portrayals of agriculture, the industry we know and love, but it's harder to effectively advocate for it. It might be intimidating to speak up, or it may be difficult to get involved without anger.

"No matter the form, the most important step to advocating for food and agriculture is to engage in a dialogue with others, even if they might disagree with us," Pagett said. "When we engage with others and have conversations, rather than arguments, with them, we become more credible and we create an opportunity to educate someone about the world we believe in."

If you find yourself in a conversation with a misinformed consumer, first ask them where they heard this information. Next, listen to their perspective and why they feel the way they do. It does no good to rush into a rant about why they are wrong. Typically, there is a very emotional root to their opinion. Finally, after you've listened to them and asked questions, calmly and rationally share your own perspective.

Again, listen, ask questions, then share your perspective and expertise.

Pagett shared various examples for advocating for agriculture outside of conversations:

- Reading accurate agricultural books to elementary school students
- Meeting with local groups about agricultural jobs in the community
- Writing or tweeting to legislators to inform them about an upcoming vote on agricultural policy
- Participating in National FFA's #SpeakAg dialogue on social media
- Participating in #AgChat discussions on Twitter
- Speaking to clubs and organizations in your area about your agricultural career or the industry

"These conversations help us bridge the gap between producer and consumer, and as a result creates a healthier discussion across the nation and our world," Pagett said.

No matter how you "agvocate," sharing your passion for our industry can make lasting impacts for our future.

#### **RESOURCES**

One of our core values at AgCareers.com is "bleed green." We are passionate and committed to what we do: agriculture. Part of that includes promoting excellent careers in agriculture. Share these resources with your peers in order to create a positive and motivational dialogue around agricultural careers.



#### AGCAREERS.COM CAREER PROFILES & INFOGRAPHICS:

The AgCareers.com Career Profiles were created in conjunction with FFA as a resource to increase learning and understanding around the great variety of opportunities in agriculture and food. Explore more than 250 different careers organized by pathway. Our infographics were modeled after our Career Profiles. providing a more visual and shareable form (great for sharing with youth).



#### CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE DIGITAL

E-BOOK: We created the Careers in Agriculture digital e-book to promote agricultural careers. This publication features interviews with agricultural professionals, industry leaders, and agvocates concerning the various challenges facing the agricultural workforce. Find versions with or without the Career Profiles included. AG



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## Looking to the FUTURE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Time to rethink your career direction? The AgCareers.com University Partners program provides universities with graduate and distance education programs in agriculture the opportunity to reach out to students and professionals. Find out more about these programs: click on the University Partners icon on www.AgCareers.com. AG





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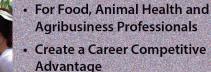
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