

EXPERIENCES FROM THE FRONT LINE

Name: Mercedes Dittrich

Education: South Dakota State University (SDSU), Major: Agricultural Systems Technology, Minors: Agronomy & Spanish

Leadership Positions: Leader of the Antelope Co. Shooting Club within 4-H program; VP of Future Business Leaders of America - junior and senior years of high school; Co-Captain of Varsity Girls Golf team - junior and senior years of high school; Class President - sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school; 4 time Junior Olympic qualifier in Air Pistol; 7th place at National Junior Olympics in Air Pistol



AM: Why are you interested in working in the agricultural industry?

I have grown up working on our family farm in a small town in Nebraska. I've always been fascinated by watching the farming process from start to finish.

Our food, clothing, and much of what we use, all trace back to agriculture. Ag is something that will always be expanding and growing in order for our society to thrive.

My main career goal is to take these challenges that stop a small farmer from growing and expanding, and find ways to not only maximize yield and profits, but also spend less in the process and overcome the day to day challenges that they face.

AM: What work experiences do you have?

I have always been a hired hand on our family farm in the small town of Tilden, NE. We have 2,500 acres of irrigated corn and soybeans and also about 50 head of cattle. I worked for producers for two years as a detasseler for seed corn.

AM: What is it you hope to gain from an internship?

Working as an intern for MaxYield Cooperative and Premier Crop in their Precision Ag programs, I

have gained so much knowledge and experience that will help me in future years. This internship has helped reassure myself that AST is a career I want to have a future in, and concentrate on a career in Precision Agriculture. I have also developed and advanced my leadership qualities and work ethic.

AM: What skills have you found most useful and/or had to refine?

A skill that I have benefited from would be to have a conversation with clients, not to only learn their goals for their farming operations, but also getting to know them on a personal note. I have spent much of my internship working one-on-one with clients, so I have had to discover how to help them make good decisions to better their farming operations.

AM: What do you look for in a prospective employer?

Although I will only be a sophomore at SDSU this fall, I have already started my search in looking for a company that I would like to start a career.

My internship has helped me learn what qualities to look for in a prospective company. I also feel it is important for a company to share your career goals, allowing you both to work and strive for something

that will make a difference, and feel a sense of accomplishment in doing so. I am pleased with employees and a boss that approves of the goals I am setting for my future, and that will give me advice along the way.

AM: How do you learn about the ag industry and the opportunities it offers?

The agriculture industry is always growing and branching into new areas. I enjoy researching not only past agricultural techniques, but also the new advances. In order to strive for a more modernized agricultural operation, one must know and understand the basics.

Field days put on by seed companies, farming expos and researching advances in agriculture all tie in to discovering ag's modernization. Talking with agronomists, precision ag specialists, farmers, and co-ops are great ways to learn what agriculture has to offer.

Job fairs are superb places to discover new opportunities. This is how I became familiar with MaxYield Cooperative.

College professors are always discussing new trials and ideas companies are researching. My advisor **Dr. Van Kelly** has been one of the greatest resources to learn about the Ag industry.

AM: What advice do you have for freshman?

Set your career goals early! Freshman year is never too early to start making decisions of where you want to be and what you want to achieve before graduating from college. Take these goals to your advisor and ask for their opinion and ideas to make them stronger and better suited for yourself.

Find out what classes you need to make your major not just a piece of paper when you graduate, but how your education will benefit you when starting the job of your choice. Internships are the best way to learn and get experience, but also to show companies your greatest skills and how you will help their business in the future.