

EXPERIENCES FROM THE FRONT LINE

Name: Sarah E. Core

Education: Animal Biology (University of Guelph), Masters of Science (University of Guelph)

Leadership Positions: Orientation Volunteer (U of G), University of Guelph Ambassador, Project Manager and Extension Coordinator (Poultry Industry Council)



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

SC: The ag industry is a great place to start a career. The industry is so diverse in career choices ranging from hands-on in the barn work to lab work, sales, extension, marketing or research to name a few.

This industry is sustainable and a lot of sectors are still thriving and hiring despite the current economy. If you are looking for a career there is something for you in agriculture.

AM: What work experiences do you have?

SC: Throughout my undergraduate degree I focused on trying to develop as many skills as possible and as part of that, I was always looking for different types of part-time work. I spent a lot of time working in a customer service based retail store where I developed communication and problem solving skills. I also spent some summers working in a meat processing plant, a breeding and farrowing swine operation and within the university as a Teaching Assistant.

Each of these experiences provided me with skills and an understanding of the industry that I now use everyday in my full time job working as a project manager and extension coordinator at Poultry Industry Council.

AM: What is it you hope to gain from your work experience?

SC: I hope to continue enjoying my work and working through

challenges that every new day presents. I am currently working in an environment that allows me to continue to develop skills that will be useful throughout my career in agriculture. And, I am in a position that allows me to meet new contacts and to keep networking.

I also enjoy being able to help bring cutting edge research to our producers in a way that is useful for them and in a way that they can apply the results to their production system.

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

SC: My organization skills and time management. I believe strength in these areas can make your career. If you can effectively manage your time and stay organized, the rest is easy. Make lists, keep a detailed calendar and write reminders for yourself.

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

SC: I think the major things to look for in an employer are a motivated team leader, a positive outlook, and a "lead by example" attitude. All of these things are key in building a great work environment and enjoying your job. An employer should also be encouraging yet able to point out areas to improve on.

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

SC: Do your homework. There is a mass of information on the internet and you can get tons of ideas not only from online job banks but search individual web sites for current job listings as well.

Also try to network as much as you can. I know it's harder than it sounds but try to break away from your friends during conferences or talks at school and talk to people from industry or speakers, you never know when you will make a good impression or will be able to contact them in the future.

AM: What advice do you have for freshmen?

SC: Here are a few tips:

Take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself to you while you are in school.

"In the classroom" should be only half of your education at university.

Networking with peers during social and volunteer events as well as meeting industry leaders is just as important for your future career as good grades.

Volunteer. If you decide to write a skills based resume you can use a lot of your experiences from volunteering to fill out your resume, even if you don't have a lot of job experience — it may be enough to get you into an interview which is the hardest part of getting a job.

Take advantage of student groups that teach you how to write a resume and how to prepare for interviews.

Attending these sessions can boost your confidence when you are applying for jobs and this is key in making a good first impression.

Diversify your interests and your education.

This will help during your job search because you won't be limited to one specific sector, and in a lot of jobs you might be expected to be able to complete lots of diverse projects or tasks.