

Recruiting & Retaining the Next Generation of Precision Farming Specialist

Ken Diller,
John Fulton &
Steve Kaufman
January 5-6, 2016



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Recruiting and Retaining

- Average employment tenure for the year 2014 was 4.7 years (*)
- For males ages 24 – 34 the average employment tenure was only 3 years (*)
- Average employment tenure for Precision Ag Specialists is only 18-24 months
 - (*) Bureau of Labor Statistics



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Recruiting and Retaining

- Culture drives some of this process for all of us in a given region or area
- Stick to your established Core Values and do not vary from them
- Just because it works in one area doesn't mean it will work everywhere
- There is no “Silver Bullet”



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Who Do You Want

- Develop a list of attributes you are looking for in the recruit
- Prioritize those attributes into what is primary and what is secondary
- Give yourself some flexibility in this process



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Primary Attributes

- Alignment with Core Values
- ATTITUDE
- Personality Type
- Willingness to work & ability to learn
- Social skills
- Are they “Self Motivated”?
- Cleanliness
- Mechanical Aptitude



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Secondary Attributes

- Culture will drive some of these attributes
- Does he need a farming background?
- College Degree
 - Type (Does it matter?)
 - 2 year or 4 year
 - Will a Technical School Degree fill your requirements?
 - Grade Point Average at graduation?
 - Resume



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Recruiting

- Word of mouth
 - Church
 - Social connections
 - Civic Organizations
 - Customers !!!!!
- High School FFA Chapters!!!!!!
 - Get involved in their FFA Programs
- University AG Programs



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Recruiting

- Agricultural publications
- Internships
- On-Line Recruiting Websites
 - Herk & Assoc
 - AgCareers.com



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Recruiting

- Will take more than one encounter with the person
- Be honest and realistic
- Don't sugar coat the job
- Spell out opportunities
- Make it interesting
- Don't discuss wages right away
- Stress "TEAM" Concept
- Don't make promises you can't keep!



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Retaining

- Instill the “TEAM” Concept
- Don’t make promises you can’t keep!
- Make them feel like they are contributing to the “TEAM”
- Reward them along with everyone else for meeting “TEAM” goals
 - Not just about money
 - Do TEAM activities



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Retaining

- Pay them an honest wage
- Allow them to give input into decisions
- Help them to see opportunities “Long Term”
- Allow them to be creative
- Fulfill your promises to them!!!!!!!!!!



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Retaining

- Do yearly performance reviews
 - Show them where they are excelling and where they are not
- Provide them with the tools to do the job well and efficiently



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Up Next ...

John Fulton



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John Fulton
Associate Professor
Ohio State University
January 5-6, 2016



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Precision Ag “New” Employee

Mixed Background

- Agronomic
- Technical
- Business (*sales support*)



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Recruitment

Colleges and Universities

- Existing Precision Ag education?
- Internships / COOP experiences
- Master of Science focused on Precision Ag projects (research background)
- Participate in campus / departmental career fairs



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Internships / Co-op Experience

Allow students to have a broad experience

- Technology recognition
- Technology setup and management
- Observe sales and service calls
- Data collection processes
- Data handling and analysis
- Other...



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Future

- More Precision Ag courses and exposure at universities and colleges.
- New curriculums leading to minors and certificates.
- Master level experiences focused on Precision Ag (data collection and analytics)



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Ohio State Current PA Course

AGSYSMT 4580 Precision Agriculture -

Introduction to the principles and technologies of precision agriculture including: Global Positioning System (GPS), guidance systems, plant and soil sensors, soil sampling, yield mapping and related technologies.



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Ohio State Planned Precision Ag Course Sequence

- ***AGSYSMT 2580 Introduction to Precision Agriculture***
(3 credits, 2 hr lecture, 2 hr lab)
- ***AGSYSMT 2980 UAS and Remote Sensing***
(3 credits, 2 hr lecture, 2 hr lab)
- ***AGSYSMT 4580 Advanced Precision Agriculture***
(3 credits, 2 hr lecture and 2 hr lab)
- ***AGSYSMT 5580 Data Analytics in Production Agriculture***
(3 credits, 1 hr lecture, 4 hr lab)



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Up Next ...

Steve Kaufman



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Steve Kaufman
Integrated Solutions Manager
PrairieLand Partners
January 5-6, 2016



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Precision Road Map

- Leadership commitment from CEO
- Created a 4th department November 2013
- Dedicated Manager for department
- Added 3 and moved 4 current positions
- Hired full time agronomist
- Data Mgt market roll out Feb 2014




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Data Solution Strategy

- Provide a turn-key solution
 - Planning to Planting to Harvesting...
- Agronomic credibility
 - Hire a full time agronomist
- Link it to their equipment investment
- Easy button  for our customers



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Building our Program

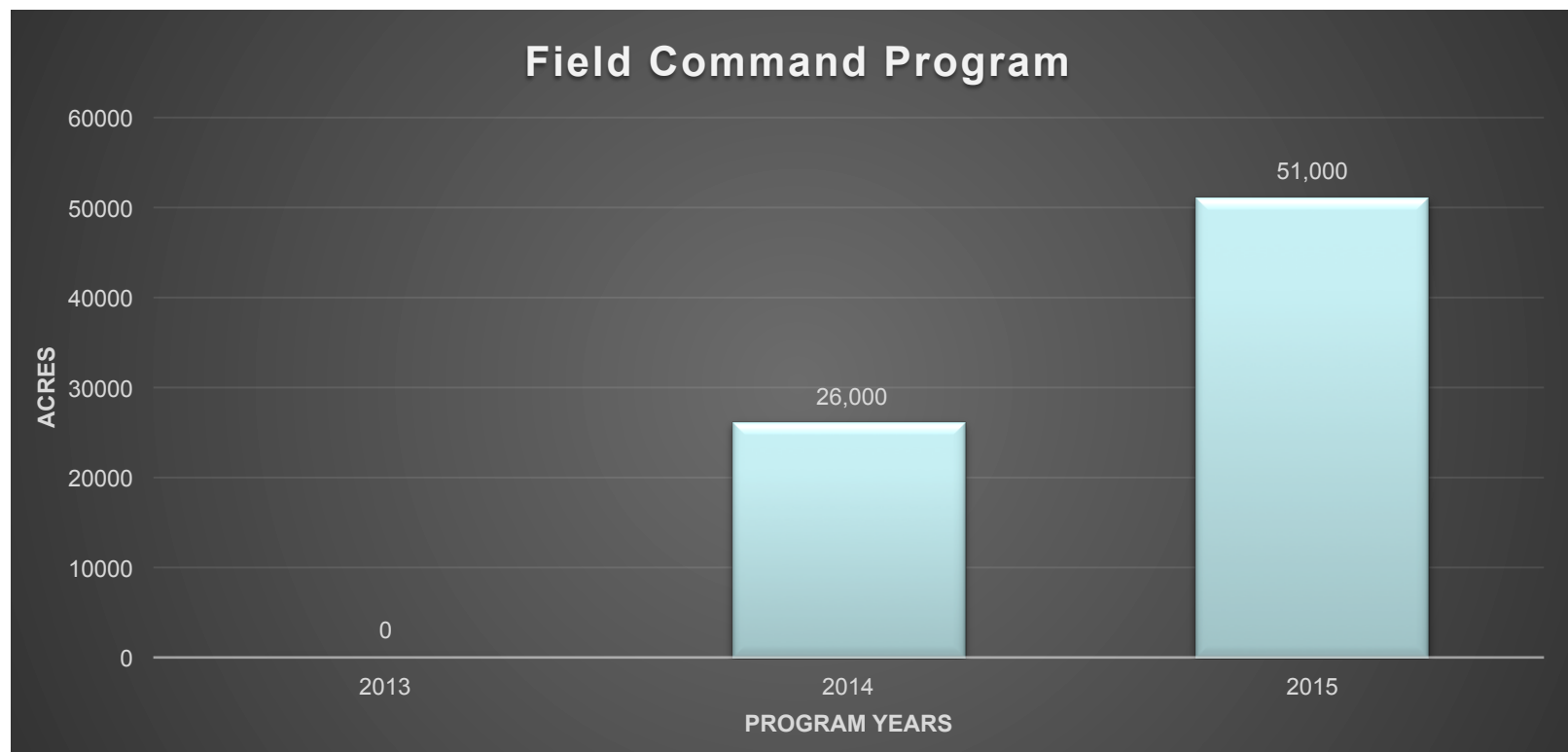
- Internal training IS and Sales Staff
 - Developed target lists per sales and IS
 - VR equipment and managed accounts
- Customer meetings per store
 - 2-3 meetings per store
 - 4 to 5 customers per meeting
- Promote program at all customer clinics



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Data Mgt Program Growth



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Revenue Growth

- 25% Revenue growth from 2014-2015
 - Added data managed acres
 - Added Grid Sampling as a product
- Partnered with a Grid Sampling company



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Advantages of an Agronomist

- Speaks the language
- Instant program credibility
- Agronomic knowledge
- Relationship with other advisors
- Brings a different perspective
- Links agronomics to Equipment
- Internal training clinics
- Customer Training clinics



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JANUARY 5-6, 2016 • INDIANAPOLIS

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Account Management

- Trusted Coordinators
- Utilize a CRM software
- Weekly communication
- Utilize their technology investment
- Challenge customer to use the program
- Challenge customer to use technology



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IS Specialist Incentives

End of Year

- \$/data acres retained
- \$/data acres new
- \$/grid sampled acres new
- \$ % of Team IS Goal
- \$/hour of IS Labor sold



Monthly

- Base Salary
- \$% of AMS sales GM
- Grid Sampling Promos
- AMS equipment Spiffs
- Sales Team Promos



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Recruiting and Retaining

- Established programs in place
- Flexibility...time, technology, task variety
- Performance incentives
- Team environment
- Challenge them to create
- In charge of projects that contribute



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Next Generation Specialist

- Trusted Coordinator
- Agronomic Understanding
- Passion for Farming
- Tech Savvy
- Understanding of producer finances
- Teachable and Coachable



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QUESTIONS?



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