

Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers

Agricultural Sales CDE

Purpose of the Event

The marketing of agricultural products is a key to profitability in today's competitive economy and agricultural sales plays a major role in the marketing process. Through this event, students will have an opportunity to prepare for careers in sales by participating in a wide range of activities oriented around the total sales process.

Objective

The objective is to develop the skill sets necessary to be successful in sales. These would include the following:

Communication Skills

- Verbal Communication.
- Written Communication.
- Interactive Communication - to be able to listen and question in order to gather information.

Product Knowledge

- Features and benefits of a product.
- Identifying potential customer objections.
- Knowledge of proper product use.

Sales Process

- Identifying prospective customers through marketing data.
- Developing an approach that introduces your product to your prospective customer.
- Develop a sales call that determines and addresses customer needs and objections.
- Attempt trial closes to confirm customer interest.
- Understand the basic business structure necessary to sell and deliver a product.
- Attempt to close the sale by asking the customer to make a buying decision.

Maintaining Customers

- Establish and build customer confidence in you and your product.
- Address customer complaints including:
 - ◆ Defective merchandise.
 - ◆ Maintain customer contact and place additional orders for sales.
 - ◆ Review product performance.

A. General Information

1. **Team:** A team shall consist of *five* (5) members. Each team member will participate in the objective test and in one of the practicums. The team will work together to solve a Team Sales Situation.
2. **Awards:** All scores will be added to calculate the team score. Individual awards will be based upon the total of (a) the objective test score and (b) the practicum score.
3. **Miscellaneous:** No one will be allowed to observe any presentation. A project summary sheet should be prepared.
5. **Registration:** This event shall be open to any school desiring to participate. Pre-registration for this career development event is expected by a deadline to be announced on the *Ag Ed Listserve*. Entry fees are not refundable.
6. **Additional Information:** Refer to National FFA Career Development Events manual.

B. Career Development Event Format (Content is similar to the National Event, but has been shortened in length.)

The career development event shall consist of three parts: (1) Objective Test (2) Practicums (3) Team Sales Situation.

The career development event will consist of 150 points per team member: test, 50 points; practicum, 100 points.

C. Career Development Events Divisions

1. Objective Test: (50 points)

The objective test is designed to test each team member's understanding of the professional sales process, the role that selling plays in the marketing of agricultural products, and the knowledge possessed by students relative to the event areas of advertising and promotion, customer relations, products display, telephone skills, market analysis and customer prospecting, job application, and interviewing for a sales position.

- a. Team members will work individually.
- b. The test will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions.
- c. The test questions will be based on the attached list of required references.
- d. Twenty-five minutes will be allotted to complete the Objective Test, with each question worth one point for a total of 50 points.

2. Practicums: (100 points)

Each participant will complete one of the five (5) designated practicums in the event. Practicums to be conducted will be coordinated with the National FFA Career Development Event, so that the same practicums will be used in both the State Career Development Event and the National Career Development Event. Each participant will be pre-assigned the practicum by the team coach prior to event registration. The event host will furnish all materials used in the practicums.

- a. Each practicum will be worth 100 points per individual.
- b. Fifteen minutes will be allotted to complete each practicum.
- c. Official FFA dress is required.

Designated Practicums:

a. Customer Relations

- The event officials will select a realistic scenario portraying a customer relations problem that may occur in agricultural sales.
- The participant will be evaluated primarily on their sales and human relation skills, and secondly on their technical knowledge of the subject matter.
- The sales person (participant) will be provided with the company policy or philosophy concerning merchandise return and refunds prior to performing the sales situation.
- It is possible the salesperson will have to develop a solution independently if the company policy does not specify one for the particular scenario. In this case the salesperson will be evaluated on their creativity, judgment and application of the philosophy of the company.
- The participant will have to obtain the majority of the information necessary to solve the problem by interaction with the customer. Examples of problems that may be used are:
 - ◆ Return of defective merchandise sold.
 - ◆ Lack of understanding in use of merchandise.

- ◆ Calming and regaining trust of a dissatisfied customer.
 - The participants will be given a scenario containing the guidelines for the situation.
 - The participants will be allowed eight (8) minutes to look over the information.
 - The participants may make notes as needed on the scenario and use the notes throughout the judging.
 - They must return the scenario to the event staff before they exit the area.
 - Seven (7) minutes will be allowed for the participants to demonstrate their customer relations skills interactively with all judges.
 - The Customer Relations Scenario will conclude at fifteen (15) minutes.
 - There will be a twelve (12) minute warning.
- b. **Order Taking/Customer Service**
- The event officials will select a scenario typical for an agricultural supply company.
 - The participants will demonstrate the skills used when taking an order and incorporating problem solving and/or suggestive selling of additional product(s).
 - The participants will be provided with a promotional flyer, catalog or other promotional material that has been mass mailed to select agricultural prospects and customers.
 - Participants will also be provided with an order form and any updated information since the mailing of the promotional material.
 - This may include such information as out of stock or price updates.
 - Participants will be given the scenario and supportive materials and allowed eight (8) minutes to look over the information.
 - Seven (7) minutes will be allowed for the participants to demonstrate their skills interactively with all judges.
 - The Order Taking/Customer Service Scenario will conclude at fifteen (15) minutes.
 - There will be a twelve (12) minute warning.
- c. **Prospecting for New Customers**
- The event officials will select a realistic sales situation scenario.
 - The participants will be given a product description.
 - The participants will then approach a customer and through interaction with that customer determine if they are a prospect.
 - The participants will then attempt to sell that product to the customer or gain an appointment for a future sales call, whichever is appropriate for the scenario.
 - The participants will have eight (8) minutes to read over the product description and the sales situation.
 - Seven (7) minutes will be allowed for the participant to demonstrate their sales prospecting skills interactively with all judges.
 - The Prospecting for New Customers Scenario will conclude at fifteen (15) minutes.
 - There will be a twelve (12) minute warning.
- d. **Host's Choice**
- The host will determine which practicum (Customer Relations, Order Taking/Customer Service or Prospecting for New Customers) will be used for the participants in this area.
 - All "host's choice" participants will complete the same practicum. All participants will complete Customer Relations or all participants will complete Order Taking/Customer Service or all participants will complete Prospecting for New Customers.
- e. **Sales Call**
- The participant will select an existing or realistic agricultural product from the list of seven (7) general product areas (listed below) and prepare the presentation in advance.

- ◆ Agricultural Mechanics
- ◆ Agricultural Production
- ◆ Agricultural Products and Processing
- ◆ Agricultural Supplies and Services
- ◆ Forestry
- ◆ Natural Resources and Rural Recreation
- ◆ Ornamental Horticulture
- The size of any props and products will not exceed what an individual participant can handle and will fit on a standard 30 inch x 48 inch folding table.
- **Note:** No flammable or corrosive materials can be brought into the event area.
- The participant will give three copies of the participant's project summary sheet to the judges before beginning their Sales Presentation.
- The requirements for the product summary sheet will be as follows:
 - ◆ The summary sheet is limited to one page, single sided and 12 pt. font (Times, Times New Roman or Arial).
 - ◆ Participant's name and state will be in the upper left-hand corner. The summary sheet should include the following:
 - ◆ Representation (company/chapter)
 - ◆ Role customer (event judge) is to play (such as dairy farmer, purchasing agent, etc.)
 - ◆ Product to be sold
 - ◆ Features of the product
 - ◆ Method of demonstration
 - ◆ Sales call objective
 - ◆ Product or service price
 - ◆ Examples of two or more competing products and their prices
- Each participant will be allowed fifteen (15) minutes for his/her sales call with a time warning at twelve (12) minutes.
- The judges will inform the participant when they are ready to begin.
- The sales call will conclude at fifteen (15) minutes. The sales call will be interactive between the participant and all judges.

3. Team Event: (200 points)

Team members work together to demonstrate group dynamics, problem solving, data analysis, decision making and oral and written communication skills while solving a Sales Situation. The following information will be provided to the team as if they were a group of professional salespeople:

1. A product (including features and price - if applicable)
2. Market situation (including competition)
3. Several potential customers

The team will then develop all the strategy necessary to prepare to sell the product in a face to face sales call. This strategy should include but not be limited to:

1. Determining potential customer needs and wants.
2. Identifying features and benefits of the products to address customers' needs and wants.
3. Identifying potential customer objections and prepare to address them.
4. Identifying potentially related products and suggested selling strategies.
5. Developing a sales plan and goals for each customer.

It is critical to remember that in addition to the final presentation being judged, teamwork and equal involvement of all team will also be judged. Also it is critical to not

only state what to do, but why to do it. Demonstrating the basic fundamentals necessary to accomplish your goal is essential. All members will be expected to participate. The judges will act as the audience, but will not engage in dialog during the presentation. It is important that all team members speak up during the entire process so that the judges can hear what is being said, as well as observe how the team works together. Participants may utilize any of the materials they are provided by the host (in the team event) for the presentation. Additionally, teams may bring a laptop computer and utilize PowerPoint for their presentations. However, if a laptop computer is utilized, the presentation will be presented on the laptop screen. Projectors will not be allowed. Desktop computers will not be allowed. Each team will be responsible for the power supply for their computer.

Each team will be given twenty-five (25) minutes to examine all the information provided, discuss and develop ideas and prepare a presentation. Each team will then have ten (10) minutes with an eight (8) minute warning to make their presentation, which will be followed by a five (5) minutes for questioning period.

D. Evaluation Criteria

1. Preapproach
 - a. Preparation for sale
 - b. Product knowledge
2. Approach
 - a. First impressions
 - b. Create customer attention
 - c. Establish rapport
 - d. Determine customer wants
3. Demonstration
 - a. Feature and related customer benefits
 - b. Allow customer to participate
 - c. Attempt trial closes
4. Handling customer objections
 - a. Identifying customer objections
 - b. Handle customer objections
5. Closing the sale
 - a. Ask for the order
 - b. Recognize closing opportunities

E. Required References

Career Development Events Handbook 2006-2010. National FFA Organization, P.O. Box 68960, 6060 FFA Drive, Indianapolis, IN.46268-6060.

ITCS Instructional Materials, University of Illinois, 1401 S. Maryland Dr., Urbana, IL 61801.
 U6030 *The Relationship of Sales to Agriculture*
 U6031 *Careers in Agricultural Sales*
 U6032 *Agricultural Sales Communications*
 U6033 *Steps in Preparing for an Agricultural Sales Call*

U6034 *Conducting an Agricultural Sales Call*

Instructional Materials Service, Texas A&M University, F.E. Box 2588, College Station, Texas 77843-2588.

8746 Agriscience 312, *Personal Skill Development in Agriculture*

Ditzenberger and Kidney, *Selling-Helping Customers Buy*. South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. 1986.

To order: 1-800-543-7972 - Stock number: S-20

Samson and Little, *Advertising Planning and Techniques*. South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. 1985.

To order: 1-800-543-7972 - Stock number: D-20

OPTIONAL REFERENCES

Agricultural Business Sales and Marketing, Curriculum Guide, Instructional Materials Laboratory, University of Missouri, Columbia. 1989.

To order: 1-800-669-2465; Instructional Materials Laboratory, 2316 Industrial Drive, Columbia, Missouri 65202. Student handout available.

Samson and Little, *Visual Merchandising - Planning and Techniques*. South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio. 1985.

To order: 1-800-543-7982 - Stock number: D-21

CRISP Publications, 1200 Hamilton Court, Menlo Park, CA 94025-1427 1-800-442-7477) FAX 650-323-5800)

- *Professional Selling*, Rebecca L. Morgan ISBN 0-931961-42-4
- *Sales Training Basics*, Elwood N. Chapman ISBN 1-56052-119-8
- *Closing*, Virden J. Thorton ISBN 1-56052-318-2
- *Calming Upset Customers*, Rebecca L. Morgan ISBN 1-56052-384-0
- *Telephone Courtesy & Customer Service*, Loyd Finch ISBN 1-56052-064-7

Sales and Service, Mike Martin, Ditzenberger and Kidney.

Selling- Helping Customers Buy. South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992, 1-800-543-7972) ISBN 0538605316

Brown and Kirkwood, *Developing the Agricultural Sale Professional* (video tape series), Farm Credit Services, St. Paul, Minnesota. 1990.

To order: 1-612-221-1458; Farm Credit Services, Education Training Department, 375 Jackson, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55102.

Video Titles: *Building Persuasive Sales Skills*

Assessing Customer Needs

Communicating Product Benefits

Getting and Giving Commitment

A Facilitator's Guide and student materials are available for each videotape.