

# Agricultural Sales Career Development Event

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## PURPOSE

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

## OBJECTIVES

The agricultural sales career development event provides the opportunity for the participant to:

- Develop verbal, written and interactive communication skills.
- Demonstrate skills to build rapport with customers.
- Discuss features and benefits of a product.
- Identify potential customer objections.
- Introduce the product to prospective customers.
- Develop a sales call that determines, and addresses customers' needs and objections.
- Attempt to close the sale by asking for a customer's buying decision.
- Identify and demonstrate the use of questions throughout the sales process.
- Develop active listening skills.

## EVENT FORMAT

The model agricultural sales event will consist of four parts: an oral sales presentation, written test, pre-call planning team activity and practicums. The event will be a team event consisting of four students. All team members will participate in the sales presentation components of the event individually. Using the team approach, each team competes as a group in the written test and pre-call planning team activity. Two practicums (Customer Relations, and Telephone Skills, with 2 members competing in each category individually) make up the remainder of the contest. The event will consist of 150 total possible points per team member (sales presentation - 100 points, and practicum - 50 points), a written team test – 50 points, and a team practicum of a pre-call planning activity - 50 points, for a total team score of 700 points.

Should a tie occur in the individual or team scores, the highest sales presentation score will break the tie. If the tie cannot be broken using the sales presentation score, the highest written test score will be used. If a tie still exists, the highest practicum score will be used to break the tie.

### I. SALES PRESENTATION

- A. All participants will conduct a sales presentation.
- B. Official FFA dress is required.
- C. The participant will select an agricultural product representing one of the seven instructional areas:
  - 1. Agricultural Mechanics
  - 2. Agricultural Production
  - 3. Agricultural Products and Processing
  - 4. Agricultural Supplies and Services
  - 5. Forestry

6. Natural Resources and Rural Recreation
  7. Ornamental Horticulture
- D. Each participant will provide a copy of the Project Summary Sheet to their sales presentation judge prior to entering the sales presentation room.
- E. Each team must bring 4 sets of all sales materials to the contest (one set per student). All sales materials must be able to be brought into the judging room by the contestant.
- F. Guidelines for the Project Summary Sheet (typed, one-page maximum):
1. Participant's name
  2. Statement of situation, circumstances, locations, etc.
  3. Representation (company/chapter)
  4. Product to be sold
  5. Features of the product
  6. Product structure
  7. Warranty
  8. Service availability
  9. Demonstration of function
  10. Competitors and pertinent information
  11. Price
  12. Closing statement or method
- G. Each participant will be allowed 7-8 minutes for his or her presentation. An additional 2-3 minutes will be allowed for judges to ask questions to clarify any part of the sales presentation.
- H. The judges will be grouped into sets of 2 to judge the first 2 presentations. This will allow judges to be consistent in their scoring. Judges will then split up to judge the remainder of the sales presentations individually. This will ensure each team member to be evaluated by a different judging style. No two team members will be judged by the same set of judges.
- I. Judges of the Sales Presentation section will be instructed to react in one of the following styles for the sales process:
1. Purchase easily from the student. Be sure to still fully utilize your 7-8 minutes with the judge.
  2. Purchase, but not on the first trial close.
  3. Purchase, but only after many objections and trial closes.
  4. Not Purchase from the student. This student can still earn top points if they handle the sales call correctly.

Note: Each of the four members of the team will get one of these types of sales calls.

J. Evaluation Criteria

1. Pre-approach (30)
  - a. Project summary sheet
  - b. Preparation for sale
  - c. Product knowledge
2. Approach (10)
  - a. First impressions
  - b. Create customer attention
  - c. Determine customer wants
  - d. Establish rapport
3. Demonstration (30)
  - a. Feature and related customer benefits
  - b. Allow customer to participate
  - c. Attempt trial closes
4. Handling customer objections (10)
  - a. Identify customer objections
  - b. Handle customer objections
5. Closing the sale (20)
  - a. Ask for the order
  - b. Recognize closing opportunities

**SALES PRESENTATION SCORECARD**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>
Pre-Approach (30)	24-30	16-23	8-15
Approach (10)	8-10	6-7	4-5
Demonstration (30)	24-30	16-23	8-15
Handling Customer Objections (10)	8-10	6-7	4-5
Closing the Sale (20)	16-20	10-15	4-9
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>			<b>100</b>

## II. Pre-Call Planning Team Event

Team members will work together to demonstrate teamwork, group dynamics, problem solving, data analysis, decision making and oral communications in the development and presentation of a “Pre-Call Plan”. Teams will be allowed to use information from their individual sales presentation. The following information will be provided to the team at the event as if they were a group of salespeople working together to develop the pre-call planning prior to conducting a sales call.

- Profile of a customer (could be a retail or a wholesale customer)
- The team will be provided with paper and pencils. No presentation equipment such as laptops, flipcharts or dry erase boards will be allowed.

The team will then develop the pre-call plan (for the product(s) they used in the individual sales call) necessary to sell the product(s) in a face-to-face sales call. This pre-call plan should identify:

- ✓ Potential questions to build rapport for the scenario.
- ✓ Common interests that team members have with the customers.
- ✓ Questions that help determine the wants and needs of the customer.
- ✓ Active listening skills or techniques for determining needs and wants.
- ✓ Potential needs and wants of the customer and match them to the products’ features and benefits.
- ✓ Potential objections of the customer.
- ✓ Potential concerns of each customer.

As part of the pre-call activity:

- ✓ Teamwork and involvement of all team members will be judged.
- ✓ Students are expected to explain their decisions for the pre-call plan based on selling principles.

The team will be given 15 minutes to work together to analyze the customer information, prepare a written Pre-Call Plan for that customer and prepare to present their plan to the judges.

Team members, after the conclusion of the 15 minute preparation time, will have 8-10 minutes to present their Pre-Call Sales Plan to the judges and answer questions from the judges.

### PRE-CALL PLANNING TEAM EVENT SCORECARD

	Possible Points
Questions to build rapport	6
Common interests with customer	6
Questions to determine wants and needs	6
Active listening skills identified and stated	6
Matching needs & wants to features & benefits	8
Identifying customer potential objections & concerns	8
Teamwork – equal involvement of all members	10
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>50</b>

### III. PRACTICUMS

Each participant will complete one of two designated practicums in the event, with no more than 2 members per practicum area. Each participant will be preassigned the practicum by the team coach prior to the event. All materials used in the practicums will be furnished at the event site. Each practicum will be worth a total of 50 points per team member. Practicum areas include:

#### Customer Relations & Telephone Skills

##### A. CUSTOMER RELATIONS PRACTICUM

The contest chairperson will select a scenario realistically portraying a customer relations problem, which may occur in agricultural sales and involves both technical information and human relation problems. The salesperson (contestant) will be provided with the company policy or philosophy prior to performing the practicum.

Types of problems which may be used are:

1. Return of merchandise sold
2. Defective merchandise
3. Lack of understanding in use of merchandise

The contestant will perform in a room in which a "customer" (the judge) is present and has a specific complaint. The contestant will attempt to work with the customer to determine the basis for the complaint and determine the proper course of action to resolve the issue. In this role-play scenario, contestants will be encouraged to use creativity in reaching a solution which shows they value the customer's satisfaction. They will utilize flexibility and problem solving skills to best understand the impact of the situation on both the customer and the agribusiness while finding a resolution that is mutually beneficial.

Contestants will have 5 minutes to prepare, and then 6-8 minutes will be allowed for the contestant to demonstrate his/her customer relations skills.

##### CUSTOMER RELATIONS SCORE CARD

	Possible Points
Conversation	
Voice, Tone, Grammar	5
Empathetic, Pleasant, Friendly	5
Confident, In Control, Takes the Lead	6
Information	
Requested from customer	6
Provided to customer	6
Assessment	
Correct identification of problem	6
Customer Validation	4
Correct solution prescribed, Creativity	6
Resolution and Closing	
Review, Verify, Draw closure	6
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>50</b>

## **B. TELEPHONE SKILLS PRACTICUM**

Each participant will demonstrate his or her telephone skills. The participant will have five minutes to study the paper and then 6-8 minutes to complete the telephone call.

Receive or place a telephone call to or from a prospect or existing customer to be handled on an extemporaneous basis. Suggested calls might be:

1. From a customer with a product complaint
2. Placing a call to an existing customer to check on product performance and build a stronger customer relationship
3. From an interested prospect inquiring about the company's product.
4. Placing a cold call to qualify a prospect.
5. From an existing customer interested in new or additional products.

### **TELEPHONE SKILLS PRACTICUM SCORECARD**

	<b>Possible Points</b>
Telephone Etiquette	4
Introduction	4
Voice	6
Attitude	10
Information Gathered from Customer	10
Evidence of Product Knowledge	6
Closing of Order/Dealing with Complaint	10
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>50</b>

## **IV. WRITTEN TEAM TEST:**

The written exam is designed to evaluate the team's knowledge of sales skills. Students will be expected to work as a team to answer test questions. One test will be completed by each team. The listed resources will be used as a basic resource, but the questions will be generated based on basic sales concepts. The test will not exceed 25 questions and a 15-minute time limit will be used. The questions will consist of multiple choice and/or fill in the blank. Each question will be worth 2 points for a total of 50 points.

## REFERENCES:

*This list of references is not intended to be all inclusive.*

Other sources may be utilized, and teachers are encouraged to make use of the very best instructional materials available. Make sure to use discretion when selecting website references by only using reputable, proven sites. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation. The most current edition of resources will be used.

- Past CDE materials and other resources are available at the MI FFA Website
- ProSelling: A Professional Approach to Selling in Agriculture and Other Industries, W. Scott Downey, ISBN-13: 978-0978895211.
- 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.
- Ditzenberger and Kidney, Selling-Helping Customers Buy, South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992, 1-800-543-7972, ISBN 0538605316.
- Big Bang Theory – Active Listening Skills Example-PS4:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZA2770\\_f84](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZA2770_f84)
- Big Bang Theory – Active Listening – Chess Clock:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sr1uS8KZbto&list=PL7h3LoLBjzWbBSarpNvTRUV8Pgi6O7fyY>
- National FFA: <https://www.ffa.org/participate/cdes/agricultural-sales/>