



Wisdom of Groups; MEY Clubs, Research Networks and Social Media

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Knowledge Doubling Curve

Buckminster Fuller created the “Knowledge Doubling Curve”; he noticed that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple. Different disciplines have different rates of growth. For example, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months. But on average human knowledge is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the build out of the “internet of things” will lead to the doubling of knowledge every 12 hours.

Agriculture is no different. Growers are constantly challenged by the huge body of information available to them. Agronomists and growers alike have long recognized the value of using all the tools available to them in developing a high yield efficient crop production system. For example, over 20 years ago, growers recognized the value of sharing information with their peers through the formation of local MEY (Maximum Economic Yield) Clubs.

In many areas of the US, in recent years those early concepts have evolved into grower/retailer/consultant/researcher partnerships known as Research Networks. Today, growers are expanding their contacts nationally, as well as, internationally. With new social media tools, growers continue to expand the circle of influence.

Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) Clubs

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, the concept of a club for MEY information evolved out of a need for growers to better understand the relationship between average yields, high yields and the most profitable yields. The disparity of the higher yield possible, but lower yield obtained was known as the yield gap. Farmers had a need to understand the production systems that narrowed this gap. By reaching out to their neighbors and retail dealers, growers found that one of the best ways to share information was to form a local MEY Club.

Research Networks

Although MEY Clubs were timely and useful to growers, they often were lacking key players, such as researchers. They also were often locally driven with little information from outside the community. Over the years the basic concept of MEY Clubs has evolved into a much broader and larger platform, both horizontally and vertically. Boarding the circle of influence has had many advantages, not only to the grower, but to all involved.

Today, on-farm **Research Networks** are on the rise because they offer so many advantages. Consider joining one and being part of a very progressive community dedicated to finding what works and what doesn't. Here are just a few reasons to get more actively involved.....

Advantages to the Grower and Adviser:

- Creates informed investment decisions
- Sorts out practices and products that are necessary for increased production
- Provides answers specific to your farm
- Informs improvements to localized recommendations

Advantages to Agricultural Retailers and Manufacturers:

- Demonstrates to customers your dedication to provide them with the best products and information possible
- Informs your product purchases and/or product developments
- Increases customer loyalty and trust; Forms relationships that are mutually beneficial

Tools of the Future

Just like MEY Clubs and Research Networks have enhanced grower knowledge, social media is well positioned to lead the agricultural community to the next level of intellectual wisdom.

Advantages to All

- Social Media is the new way to link Agriculture!
- New start ups, such as AgInsider (AgInsider.com), allow farmers to expand their network of trusted advisors through:
 - Access through a multitude of social media channels
 - Individual and group discussions
 - Questions and Answers
 - Curated media from leading universities and conferences

In Summary: As production agriculture gets more and more complicated and challenging, growers, along with their advisors and input suppliers, must constantly search out new information which will help them be sustainable and profitable. Therefore, getting involved in an informational sharing venue is not only beneficial, but critical to their future success. After all, there is greater wisdom in groups.

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