

Case Study:

Plot Trial Programs

Situation:

The crop protection landscape is getting ever more crowded and, in many cases, it is difficult to differentiate one brand from another in terms of performance. Layer in herbicide resistance, regional climate, and soil conditions, and cultural practices, and it is a veritable labyrinth of data for growers to wade through when making decisions for their farm. Local field-scale trials provide fact-based answers to the decisions that growers face every day, including questions about alternative practices that may be more profitable in their own situations. Starting in 2014, AgCall worked closely with our client to develop a highly prescriptive approach to crop protection by organizing field-scale trials across the country to identify best practices to maximize yield and crop quality. This is a high-touch program with the client's sales representatives developing a season-long plan comparing their recommended program against the grower's standard program that is supported by a team of AgCall field specialists.

Issues the Work is Trying to Solve:

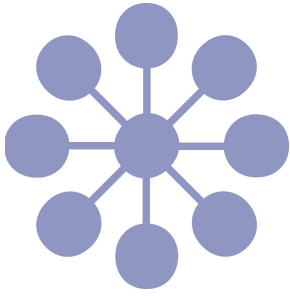
- Lack of familiarity with a whole new approach to on-farm trials and grower engagement
- Organize a database of trials that accurately represent growing conditions, cultural practices, soil types, and real-world conditions across a wide geography
- Take the burden of site management and data collection off of the client's sales team to allow them to focus on selling, while still obtaining a complete, comprehensive data set for each trial

Business Objectives:

- Build awareness and confidence around client's innovative approach to working with individual growers to develop a planned approach for high yield management by incorporating client crop protection products at appropriate intervals throughout the growing season
- Establish and maintain plot sites that accurately reflect real-world farming practices
- Gather data and assets, including agronomic assessments, photos, yield data and grower comments from the trials to help tell the story at a local level

Strategy & Action:

- Recruit, train, and manage an appropriate number of Associates to efficiently manage and collect data on the defined number of trials, and audit Associates to ensure performance against stated objectives
- Work with client sales reps to select growers for the program, secure program participation agreements and develop a season-long, prescriptive plan for each grower
- Manage all sites, including staking, labeling of strips, signing, ensuring that products are applied as directed, and obtaining grower testimonials (as required)
- Develop a series of forms to collect field data, growing season data, grower comments and other relevant information with established procedures at each visit, then utilize the AgCall Field Trial Manager™ platform to manage and report all plot data
- Capture photos throughout the season, comparing the client program to the grower standard, and store all photos in an online file sharing database that is also accessible by the client
- Provide grower and Associate observations, site visit reports, photos and any other relevant data on a weekly basis
- Administer all aspects of compensation for the Associate team and administer honorarium payment to each grower completing the program, providing all required data and completing a satisfaction survey
- Provide an end-of-season summary for each trial to showcase treatments, visual and yield results, and grower comments.



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Results:

Over the years, AgCall has managed thousands of plot trials across the U.S. and Canada. Highlights of this U.S.-based program include:

2014

- 72 trials, managed by 18 Associates
- 2,200 photos
- 290 grower comments captured
- 585 Associate comments captured
- 7,440 data points evaluated
- Four on-site testimonial video shoots, coordinated through client's advertising agency

2015

- 73 trials, managed by 28 Associates
- 3,200 photos
- 365 grower comments captured
- 446 Associate comments captured
- 3,000+ data points evaluated
- Seven on-site testimonial video shoots, coordinated through client's advertising agency

2016 (to date)

- 45 active trials, managed by 23 Associates
- 784 photos
- 161 grower and Associate comments captured
- One on-site testimonial video shoot, coordinated through client's advertising agency

Additionally, this program has provided the client with a robust set of marketing communications content that has been used to fuel social media messaging, website content, advertising, trial summary fact sheets, and testimonial videos.