

Know Your Audience - A Multi-pronged Approach to Information Transfer and Impact Assessment.

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Abstract:

Computers, clickers and video clips have been added to the arsenal of Coffee Pots and Crop Updates to help the members of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program address the needs of an audience that is as diverse as it is geographically spread out.

Background and justification:

Issue – The geographically large area covered by the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program creates difficulties in developing programming that fits the needs of all growers in all areas. In addition, vineyard and winery start-ups continue to be one of the growth areas in the region, with interest typically coming from individuals with little or no agricultural background. Many of the new growers are approaching the business as a part-time venture as they continue in their full time jobs, making it difficult for them to attend much of the programming that has been developed and is well received by existing conventional growers.

Response – Informal Coffee Pot meetings have been held weekly during the growing season at grower venues throughout the Lake Erie Grape Belt. This face-to-face interaction is critical in the learning process by the LERGP extension team of the particular qualities of an area and the audience involved, especially with two members joining the team within the last two years. In conjunction with Extension Administration the team purchased Turning Technologies “Clickers”, audience response product, to collect information via digital surveys on the usefulness and impacts of extension programming. At the beginning of the growing season the surveys were conducted at the end of the meeting. However, it was found the questions evoked enough discussion that the surveys became part of the meetings introduction. In recent years the LERGP Extension team has built upon the Lake Erie grape processing industry’s desire to move communication with growers to a digital format through an weekly electronic newsletter, The Crop Update. Information gathered during Coffee Pot meetings and now, results from “Clicker” surveys, is being used as a basis for the information contained in The Crop Update. To assist growers in becoming more computer savvy, the team has purchased 10 net book computers for use in training sessions on anything from basic computer skills to record keeping with TracGrape and/or spreadsheets developed by the team. Taking the use of electronic transfer of information one step further the LERGP extension team has created video clips of 13 production practices and placed them on the web at <http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=LERGPvids#g/u> Companion worksheets to evaluate the economics of the 13 production practices are being developed and made available electronically as well. The following electronic information

transfer tools have been developed, implemented, and maintained for the grape industry in New York and Pennsylvania.

- a. *The Crop Update*. This electronic newsletter is a collaborative effort of Lake Erie Regional Grape Program extension team members in New York and Pennsylvania and is delivered on a weekly basis via email.
- b. Historical weather database incorporating weather records for the Fredonia Vineyard Lab from 1926 to present. <http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/weather.htm>
- c. New York State Grape IPM Web site home page
<http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/IPM/Home.htm>
- d. Elements of IPM for Grapes in New York
<http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/elements/grapes.asp>
- e. New York and Pennsylvania Pest Management Guidelines for Grapes
<http://ipmguidelines.org/grapes/default.asp>
- f. Lake Erie Regional Grape Program web site home page
<http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/index.htm>
- g. Videos of production practices featuring growers who have implemented research based information into their vineyard operation as well as the economics involved with the practice. <http://www.youtube.com/LERGPvids>

Impacts:

Surveys at Coffee Pot Meetings in 2009 using Turning Technologies “Clickers” showed

- 86.5% of participants found the video clips and economic worksheets on determining the need for nitrogen fertilization in vineyards useful.
- 50% of Coffee Pot participants did not have a written business plan.
- 82% were aware of Wayne Wilcox’s research on early season Phomopsis sprays but only 59% used the information to time an early spray.
- 70% of participants planned on doing crop estimation, a significant increase from years pasts.

Computer training on TracGrape and record keeping spreadsheets has been conducted using the mobile computer lab for small groups that was not possible, or at the very least difficult, before the purchase of the net books. Previously a computer lab at the local community college would need to be reserved or growers were asked to bring in their own computers or were able to “borrow” from a limited number of laptops with different operating systems and versions of software. Many classes needed to be cancelled due to lack of enrollment making the cost of renting the computer lab prohibitive. The mobile computer lab allows for smaller class sizes, which better fits into the educational process, while also allowing the presenter to concentrate on the training rather than the differences in the computers or software.

Project location(s):

Grape Growing Regions of Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara Counties in New York and Erie County, Pennsylvania