

TODAYS AGRICULTURE

Opening the Doors: Farming • Knowledge • Trust

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Final Report to PSB on Today's Agriculture

*This project received funding from the
Pennsylvania Soybean Board in the amount of \$5,000.*

*PSB Contract # E2011 100 "Looking in on Modern Agriculture"
\$2,500 was paid on 7/26/2011*

Requesting the remaining \$2,500 be paid upon receipt of this report.

Executive Summary

What is *Today's Agriculture*? We defined this by constructing a 10,000 square feet display inside the Pennsylvania Farm Show, which attracts more than 400,000 people annually to Harrisburg, PA the first full week in January each year.

The 84' x 42' barn was home to food production animals such as, pigs, broilers, ducks, turkeys, layers, cows, veal calves and beef cattle. Each animal group was housed in penning that is traditionally used in larger confinement farms complete with manure collection systems. The adjoining crop land featured young seed stock through mature crops of corn, soybeans and cover crops. Outside the barn were 2 large grain bins, a feed truck demonstrating how feed is augered into the bins and tractors with drills and planters to help the public better understand what each item is they see when going down the road. All these items were identified with signage stating what they were seeing at that moment.

This is our definition of *Today's Agriculture*.

The average consumer is several generations removed from the farm and no longer knows how animals and crops are raised. This display removed the mystery of agriculture by bringing the farm to the people while providing one on one dialogue and learning for children and adults.

The *Today's Agriculture* display led itself to be a self-guided tour and learning opportunity for all ages.

In total, more than 200,000 people toured the barn during the 8 day show. Countless newspaper, television, and radio interviews were conducted including but not limited to: RFD-TV; Progressive Dairy, Farm and Dairy, Lancaster Farming and Trent Loos – Loos Tales.

More than 350 farmers and agribusiness associates donated their time to spend at the display and talk one on one with the visitors and answer any questions or concerns they had about how the animals are raised and cared for to questions about food quality and safety.

The total cost of this project exceeded \$125,000. This endeavor was financed 100% by donations and sponsorships which included labor, materials and monetary contributions. More than 5,000 man hours were credited to this project before the Today's Agriculture doors were opened on January 3, 2012. During the 8 days show, an additional 1,920 hours were donated by the volunteers.

Overview

Work began on this project in February 2011 by reaching out to the various food production commodities within the Commonwealth. Swine, dairy, beef, veal, poultry, corn and soybeans groups were contacted and obtained their support for moving this project forward.

A call to action was issued to PA Agriculture to help support this project and more than 100 agribusinesses, organizations and farmers answered the call by donating materials, time and labor, marketing expertise, animals, seeds and financial contributions.

A creative team was hired, Streetmarc, to develop the brochure that was distributed. All the commodity groups wrote their section of the brochure and supported that the brochure would be the one and only handout associated with the display. Pen backdrops were created that highlighted what the actual barn looks like that houses the animals and depicted the farm family that raises the animals.

We developed a media plan that included press releases, social media (facebook, twitter and webpages), radio and television.

Work began on December 9, 2011 to erect the barn inside the PA Farm Show Complex. This was completed on January 3, 2012.

On January 4, 2012, the official unveiling of the Today's Agriculture display was held and the barn was open to the public during the PA Farm Show (January 6-14, 2012).

During the week, numerous interviews by PA Legislators were held at the display and in addition, Congressman Toomey held a press conference in front of the Today's Agriculture display to talk to farmers about EPA regulations.

Attached to this final report, you will find:

- Copy of the Today's Agriculture brochure that was given to all who visited (in weeks following the show, hundreds of these brochures were requested by school groups, clubs, and other key influencers)
- Copy of an survey we conducted of the supporter/sponsors of the display and the volunteers who worked the display.

This project proved to be educational and informative to the general public but also a valuable learning experience for our farmers and volunteers. At this time, we plan on doing the project again in 2013.

Since the completion of this project, we have received numerous requests from other states for information and basically wanting us to answer the question “how did you pull this off” – we dedicated many hours to this project and found it to be truly rewarding and effective in moving the needle of public understanding and awareness of Pennsylvania’s agriculture. We are happy to share this experience with others and will gladly help other states by sharing our success as well as the things we plan to change for next year. If you would like us to present this information at a PSB meeting of the Directors or other venue, we would be honored to do so.

Point of contact for this project was Chris Herr (cherr@pennag.com)