

AgGateway 2017-18 Communications Plan

Situation Analysis

As the industry negotiates the current downturn in commodity prices and continuing consolidation, AgGateway is in a key position to promote the efficiencies – sought by all agribusinesses – that come through implementation of eConnectivity. While it can be more challenging to argue for investment in lean times, AgGateway’s members can attest to the significant, immediate and long-term savings that come with eConnectivity, as well as its critical role today in positioning companies for future success.

In the past three years AgGateway has raised its profile in the industry and continues to build membership, closing out 2016 with about 230 members. 2016 successes included the launch of the ADAPT framework; continuing progress on SPADE and PAIL Projects; increased connectivity in the seed, crop protection and crop nutrition sectors; an impressive first year of progress by the Specialty Chemical Council, a new sales reporting format and a push for barcoding by the Ag Retail Council; and continuing positive efforts by other councils and committees. Other highlights of the year include the successful Mid-Year Meeting and Annual Conference, as well as increasing activities of the AgGateway Global Network, which in turn builds awareness of AgGateway (North America) and bolsters our position as a focal point in the work of eBusiness in agriculture.

There are several challenges facing AgGateway in the next two years; two primary ones are:

1. Retain and energize the current membership to increase implementation activities.
2. Attract new members to add to this energy and implementation.

Communication obviously plays a key role in these efforts:

- Members need information on AgGateway resources and achievements as a means to encourage implementation.
- Members need effective communications tools to share with their executives and with trading partners on the value of eConnectivity.
- Potential members need to hear often and clearly, from multiple sources, about the importance of participating in AgGateway and benefits of eConnectivity.

Strategic Approach

Communications efforts in 2017 and 2018 will continue to focus on encouraging industry participation in eConnectivity activities – specifically by leveraging AgGateway resources and participation in AgGateway initiatives. We will continue to provide more targeted communications to key sectors, including ag retail, general crop inputs (crop protection, crop nutrition, seed, etc.), precision agriculture, specialty chemical and grain/feed. For each sector we will focus on the various contact points (news media, conferences/trade shows, social media, trade associations) as a means to reach decision makers. We will also provide more tools for AgGateway members to use in communicating to their c-suite executives on the value of AgGateway and eConnectivity.

AgGateway Corporate Objectives

This plan directly addresses AgGateway's Strategic Objective #2 (2016-18 Strategic Plan):

- Articulate a powerful message about what we are trying to achieve and the value for the members and the industry. Develop and implement a multi-year marketing plan to communicate a powerful message regarding the benefits and value of eAgriculture and AgGateway resulting in 20% membership growth and 96% retention by 2018.
 - Result: More members and more connectivity.
 - 2017 Objective: Implement the multi-year plan developed in 2016 to communicate the benefits and value of AgGateway and eAgriculture resulting in 10% membership growth (23 new members) and 96% retention to be measured in December 2017.

This plan also supports the other three 2016-18 Strategic Objectives, especially #1 and #3:

- Create and implement a plan to broaden the scope of eAgriculture by 2018.
 - Result: More members, more eBusiness implementation, and a more connected industry.
- Grow membership and increase engagement of members.
 - Results: Stronger organization and more members benefiting from eBusiness.

**Note: This plan does not include Membership Acquisition and assumes these efforts are detailed in a separate plan.*

Tactics

Below we have listed tactics in terms of the organization as a whole, as well as five key sectors/sub-groups: Ag Retail, Precision Ag, Crop Inputs, Grain & Feed, Specialty Chemical.

General (Corporate) Tactical Plan

The following tactics will support the above strategic objectives for the entire membership.

- **Website**

New website launched in late 2016. Continue to refine the new site as an effective marketing tool, including:

 - Facilitating newcomers with orientation of AgGateway and eConnectivity
 - Promote use of AgGateway resources (AGIIS, AgGlossary etc.)
 - Leadership recognition – Continue to recognize active companies and individuals to celebrate achievements and encourage additional volunteer participation.
 - Continue to refine and improve the “Communications Kit” on the website with both general and targeted materials for use by the membership. Equip AgGateway members with messages and materials to share with c-suite executives within their companies.
 - Provide news clips and other information on the site that demonstrate AgGateway's importance in promoting eConnectivity in the industry.

- **Newsletter**
 - Work with Communication Committee to continue tight management and good variety of contributions demonstrating breadth of AgGateway activities.
 - Step up contributions from Councils and Committees as to what they're working on.
 - Continue leadership recognition.
 - Continue social media promotion of newsletter articles.

- **Materials Development**
 - Annual Report
 - Create a report in fall 2017 that demonstrates AgGateway value and progress.
 - Evaluate whether to publish another report in 2018.
 - Video – complete in Q1 17 AgGateway resources video; promote. Explore appropriate video topic for 2017, considering an animation approach.
 - Intro to AgGateway Presentation – Update this generic PowerPoint presentation for use by members.

- **Media Relations**
 - Goal of at least 1 press release/month
 - Ramp up media relations targeted to specific areas (see sector plans below).

- **Social Media**
 - Continue daily activity with the help of the Communications Committee's social media task force.
 - Promote further activity of the new LinkedIn group.
 - Ramp up increased social media activity by specific area (see sector plans below).

- **Corporate Branding**
 - Finalize the AgGateway (North America) branding document, including policy on “Enabled by” logo use.
 - Create and execute a plan in 2017 that solidifies and protects the AgGateway brand as it is used in North America and throughout the AgGateway Global Network.

- **Trade Shows**
 - Identify key meetings of importance to AgGateway in general and by sector. Consider attendance at these meetings by AgGateway staff and/or leverage member attendance at these meetings. Arm members with AgGateway messaging and materials to share (see also sector plans).
 - Create new booth banners in early 2017 – ready by Mid-Year Meeting.

- **Meeting Promotion**
 - Promote Mid-Year Meeting and Annual Conference, as a way to increase awareness of AgGateway and engagement. (See Appendix I for 2017 promotion plans)

- **Awards Program**
 - Continue Ron Storms Leadership Award and AgGateway in Action Awards for volunteer recognition.

Sector Plans

I. Ag Retail

- In Q1 2017, work with the Ag Retail Council to identify specific messages to be promoted as a means to attract more ag retailers to eConnectivity.
 - Discuss ways to better reach c-suite executives with messages about what is readily available for implementation and value/ROI.
- In Q1 2017, identify conferences/trade shows at which to increase our presence/activity and develop plan for how to do this.
 - In Feb. 2017, conference committee for ARA's December Annual Conference & Expo meets; include a pitch for an eConnectivity session for their consideration.
 - Consider ways to work with ARA state and regional groups, presence at their meetings, etc.
- Media relations: Work with the council to produce at least one ag retail-specific press release in 2017.
- Barcoding effort: support AIDC task force and Ag Retail Council in ways to move barcoding forward, such as their new video idea; develop plan in Q1 2017.
- Also in Q1, help staff, Ag Retail Council and Conference Committee explore the concept of an ag retail seminar in conjunction with MYM 2017 in Altoona; promote the seminar if the concept moves forward.
- In Q4 2017 develop more specific plan for 2018 to build on these efforts.

II. Precision Ag

- In Q1 2017, identify with Precision Ag Council (PAC) and ADAPT Committee a plan for the year to include:
 - The main conferences/trade shows at which to increase our presence/activity, to include at least:
 - InfoAg (July 25-27, 2017)
 - Agritechnica (Nov. 12-18, 2017)
 - Which trade associations/organizations to target for amplifying our messages.
 - For ADAPT, assistance with the committee in communicating to FMIS companies, others, on implementation.
- Materials/Resources
 - In Q1 and Q2, improve precision ag presence on AgGateway website to better cover the amount of work being done and its ramifications for the industry.
 - Create or update flyers or other materials as needed for the trade shows above or other purposes as discussed with the PAC and ADAPT Committee.
 - Company publications – encourage members to have their company publications run stories on the company's work with AgGateway.
 - Promotion of materials, media coverage, etc., through social media.
 - Encourage members to run items on LinkedIn group and to invite others to the group.
- Media relations:
 - At least 3 press releases during the year, when there is new (e.g., PAIL standard) and before major trade shows on PAC activities.
 - Early 2017: PAIL, Core Documents
 - Revisit media outlets and contact information on our press list to refine our precision ag target list.
 - Place at least 2 guest columns in precision ag publications during each year, 2017 and 2018.

- Regional workshops/webinars: Explore opportunities with PAC and Conference Committee for ADAPT regional workshops and/or webinars.
- Continue work with the Coalition to Advance Precision Ag (CAPA), to strengthen relationship with fellow association communicators in the space and amplify our messaging.
- In Q4 2017 develop more specific plan for 2018 to build on these efforts.

III. Crop Inputs

- In Q1 2017, work with the Crop Nutrition, Crop Protection and Seed Councils to identify specific messages to be promoted and ways to promote them as a means to attract more companies to eConnectivity. Explore ways in which these councils' interests coincide with other councils (e.g., Precision Ag Council, Ag Retail Council) and how communications efforts might be coordinated and strengthened.
 - Discuss ways to better reach c-suite executives with messages about what is readily available for implementation and value/ROI.
 - Identify the main conferences/trade shows at which to increase our presence/activity.
 - Identify which trade associations/organizations to target for amplifying our messages and the best ways to do that.
- Materials/Resources
 - Create or update flyers or other materials as needed for the trade shows above or other purposes as discussed with the councils.
 - Company publications – encourage members to have their company publications run stories on the company's work with AgGateway.
 - Promotion of materials, media coverage, etc., through social media.
 - Encourage members to run items on LinkedIn group and to invite others to the group.
- Barcoding effort: in conjunction with AIDC task force and Ag Retail Council, work with Seed Council and others to support ways to move barcoding forward, such as the new video proposed in late 2016; develop plan in Q1 2017.
- In Q4 2017 develop more specific plan for 2018 to build on these efforts.

IV. Grain & Feed

- In Q1 2017, work with the Grain & Feed Council to identify specific messages to be promoted and ways to promote them as a means to attract more companies to eConnectivity. Explore ways in which this council's interests coincide with other councils (e.g., Precision Ag Council) and how communications efforts might be coordinated and strengthened.
 - Discuss ways to better reach c-suite executives with messages about what is readily available for implementation and value/ROI.
 - Identify the main conferences/trade shows at which to increase our presence/activity.
 - Identify which trade associations/organizations to target for amplifying our messages and the best ways to do that.
- Media relations
 - Revisit media outlets and contact information on our press list to refine our grain and feed target list. Conduct outreach to reporters as necessary.
 - Work with the council to create at least one Grain & Feed specific press release in 2017.

- Materials/Resources
 - Create or update flyers or other materials as needed for the trade shows above or other purposes as discussed with the council.
 - Company publications – encourage members to have their company publications run stories on the company’s work with AgGateway.
 - Promotion of materials, media coverage, etc., through social media.
 - Encourage members to run items on LinkedIn group and to invite others to the group.
- In Q4 2017 develop more specific plan for 2018 to build on these efforts.

V. Specialty Chemical

- In Q1 2017, work with the Specialty Chemical Council to identify specific messages to be promoted and ways to promote them as a means to attract more companies to eConnectivity.
 - Discuss ways to better reach c-suite executives with messages (value/ROI).
 - Identify the main conferences/trade shows at which to increase our presence/activity.
 - Identify which trade associations/organizations to target for amplifying our messages and the best ways to do that. (J Nolfo has provided a list to work with.)
- Media relations
 - Work with the council to create at least one Specialty Chemical press release in 2017.
- Materials/Resources
 - Create flyer or other materials as needed for the trade shows above or other purposes as discussed with the council.
 - Company publications – encourage members to have their company publications run stories on the company’s work with AgGateway.
 - Promotion of materials, media coverage, etc., through social media.
 - Encourage members to run items on LinkedIn group and to invite others to the group.
- In Q4 2017 develop more specific plan for 2018 to build on these efforts.

2017 Preliminary Calendar – *More activities to be determined by Q1 discussions with councils*

Audience	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website refinements - Press releases, social media - Promote videos (from '16) & Communications Kit - Update Intro to AGW Presentation - Finalize AGW (North America) corp brand document and create international policy document - MYM promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases, social media - MYM promotion - Create Annual Report, or plan for Annual Report release in Q4 - Create new trade show banners (in time for MYM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases, social media - Annual Conf promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press releases, social media - Annual Conf promotion - Awards programs - 2018 plans
Ag Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning w/council - Barcoding video outline - ARA-program committee outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop at MYM 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ARA conference 2018 plans
Crop Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning w/councils 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2018 plans
Precision Ag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning w/council - Plans for Commodity Classic in March 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prep for InfoAg - Regional ADAPT workshop? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - InfoAg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agritechnica - 2018 plans
Grain & Feed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning w/council - Media lists - Trade org outreach 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2018 plans
Specialty Chem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning w/council - Trade org outreach - Trade show/conference prioritization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials development and use at events 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2018 plans

Appendix: Meeting Promotion Plans

2017 Mid-Year Meeting Promotion Plan

Meeting is June 12-15, Prairie Meadows, Altoona, Iowa

Assumes registration opens March 24

Jan-Feb.

- Website: Home page promotion – Mark your calendar.
- eBlast: Mark your calendar - both MYM and Annual Conference dates (by 1/20)
- Newsletters:
 - Jan/Feb. - Mark your calendar (both meetings)
 - March issue – Mark calendar (due 2/17; publish 3/8)

March

- Website: Detailed MYM meeting page under Events (details posted by 3/17)
 - Home page promotion – Register now! (by 3/31)
- Press release when registration opens (3/24)
- eBlast: Register Now! (3/30)
- Newsletter: April issue – Hotel, registration details; highlights, sponsorships – (due 3/17, publish 4/5)

April

- eBlasts
 - Register and Reserve hotel now (4/11)
 - Sponsorships (4/25)
- Newsletter: May issue – Highlights, invite a trading partner (due 4/18; publish 5/4)
- Communication to Councils to encourage registration (4/4)
- Trade associations: Blurbs with request to run on their websites/newsletters (4/5)

May

- Press release - promote speaker and educational opps, invite a trading partner – (5/3)
- eBlasts:
 - Hotel reminder, invite a colleague (5 reasons you should be at MYM) – (5/2)
 - Invite a trading partner, hotel/registration reminder – (5/9)
 - Previous attendees eblast (5/16)
 - Networking opportunities, roughly 2 weeks out registration reminder – (5/25)
- Communication to councils to encourage registration (5/2)
- Newsletter: last minute information, transportation options (due 5/19; publish 6/5)

June (meeting begins June 12)

- Membership eblasts:
 - Final reminder/logistics details (6/1)
 - Survey (6/23)
- Newsletter – July issue – thank sponsors (due 6/16)

2017 Annual Conference Promotion Plan

Meeting is Nov. 6-9, Hilton Resort & Spa, San Diego, California

Assumes registration opens 8/4 (about 3 months before meeting)

Jan-Feb.

- Website: Home page promotion – Mark your calendar
- eBlast: Mark your calendar - both MYM and Annual Conference dates (by 1/20)
- Newsletters:
 - Jan/Feb. - Mark your calendar (both meetings)
 - March issue – Mark calendar (due 2/17; publish 3/8)

March-June

- Website: Events page set up (by June)
- Newsletter: Save the date on right sidebar of newsletter
- MYM: Promotion at the meeting for Annual Conference

July

- Newsletter: August issue – register now, invite trading partners, highlights (due 7/14; publish 8/3)
Additional related articles: Ron Storms and GTAC nominations open.
- Ads: Work to secure at least two low-cost/free ads in trade pubs by 7/14, to run Sept./Oct.

August

- Press releases: Registration Open! (8/9)
- Website:
 - Rotating banner – Register now!
 - Annual Conference page – pdf of conference flyer posted (8/9)
- Newsletter: Sept issue – Register now, highlights (due 8/18; publish 9/6)
- eBlasts
 - Registration open! (8/8)
 - Ron Storms call for nominations (8/22)
- Councils: Communication to councils to encourage registration, invite teams and trading partners (8/9)

September

- Association Partners: Ask to run promo blurbs in their website/newsletters (by 9/11)
- Press Release: Speakers, educational highlights, special events (9/11)
- Newsletter – October issue: Networking, special events (due 9/18; publish 10/7)
- eBlasts:
 - Ron Storms call for nominations (9/6)
 - Why come? Link to flyer (9/8)
 - GTAC nominations closing soon (9/14)
 - Registered yet? Early bird rates, keynote speaker, educational highlights (9/21)
 - Early bird hotel rate ends [DATE] - *UPDATE as needed* - (9/28)

- Councils: Communication to councils to encourage registration, invite teams and trading partners (9/8)

October

- Website: Promote list of who's already registered.
- Newsletter: Not too late, last-minute announcements (due 10/14; publish 11/2)
- eBlasts:
 - See who else is coming, location highlights (10/5)
 - Invite a trading partner (10/12)
 - Keynote speaker, thank sponsors (10/10)
 - It's not too late to register! Early bird drawing winner (10/26)
- Councils: Communication to councils to encourage registration (10/5)

November

- eBlasts:
 - Checklist for the conference (11/2)
 - First time attendee lunch
 - Survey (11/14)

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