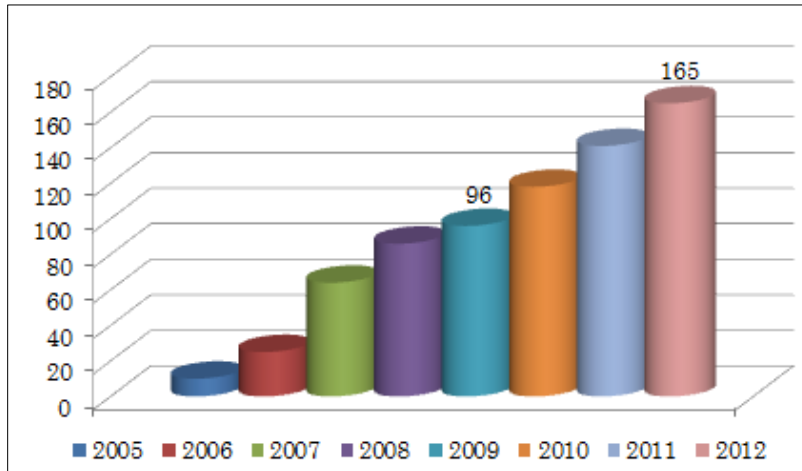


AgGateway 2013 Communications Plan

Situation Analysis

AgGateway has experienced significant growth since its inception in 2005, and has passed a threshold of being a small, start-up organization to a significant presence in promoting eBusiness in agriculture. Current membership stands at 165 members. In 2012 alone, membership grew from 141 to 165 members, with 7 lost members and 31 new members added.



While this growth reflects a clear need for and appreciation of AgGateway within the agriculture industry, there remain serious gaps in communications to buttress AgGateway initiatives.

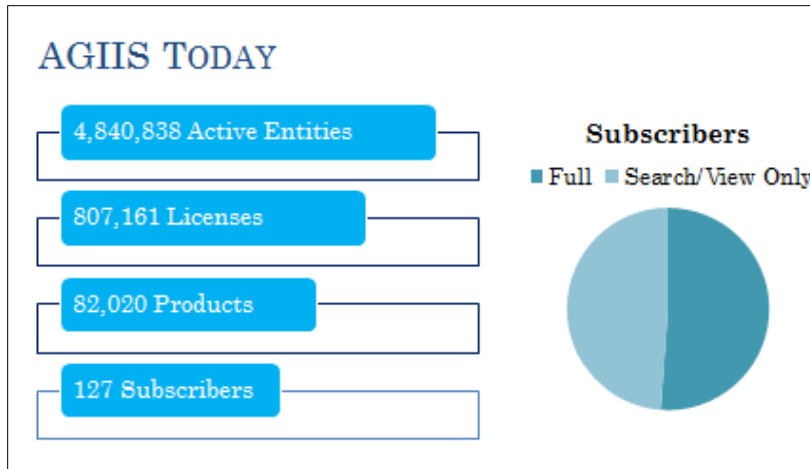
Specifically:

- New AgGateway members require additional onboarding and ongoing care to ensure their satisfaction and engagement.
- All members need the means to better understand and communicate eBusiness (AgGateway) goals within their respective organizations to facilitate further eConnectivity.
- AgGateway needs to build awareness of its presence and value (and the value of eBusiness) within the ag community as a whole.

AGIIS

An important factor in AgGateway growth is the Ag Industry Identification System (AGIIS), so this plan incorporates communications supporting its objectives for the year.

Today, AGIIS is a critical asset enabling eBusiness, and is currently the only industry-wide, collaborative database delivering unique identifiers to the agricultural industry.



While some large organizations use the AGIIS system heavily, we need greater awareness and broader adoption. We also need to ensure that AGIIS is fully utilized. In addition, we will need to continually improve the database – and promote those improvements – to maintain the value and applicability of the asset.

This plan provides strategic goals and tactical detail on how to approach these AgGateway and AGIIS communications gaps and needs in the current calendar year.

Strategic Objectives

While this plan is relevant to all of AgGateway’s 2013-15 strategic objectives, in particular it provides tactical direction supporting the first objective, which is:

- **Promote the value and benefits of eBusiness and membership in AgGateway**
Implement a marketing and promotional plan to increase awareness and positive impression of AgGateway and of the value of membership, within the targeted agriculture industry audiences, by a reasonable amount by 2015.

Tactical objective: Create and execute a benchmark survey to establish baseline awareness of AgGateway for both internal and external audiences and to define the "reasonable amount" for the 3-year strategic objective; develop the messages appropriate for each audience and create a communication plan by December 2013.

Specifically, our 2013 communications objective is to increase eConnectivity in the ag industry through increased awareness, membership and participation in AgGateway, which we will achieve by better communicating to members, potential members and the industry:

- **Benefits of eBusiness**, and the immediate necessity of implementing eBusiness steps within their businesses
- **AgGateway benefits and value (awareness)** – the unique attributes of AgGateway in the area of eBusiness, the value of the tools and collaboration provided within AgGateway, and the benefits of participation in councils, committees, projects.

..And specifically for members:

- **How to better access and use AgGateway resources**

- **Personal benefits and satisfaction** from membership and participation

In addition, this plan supports AGIIS 2013 Objectives, to:

- Increase the number of new AGIIS subscribers with full subscriptions by 15%
- Convert 20% of current search/view only subscribers to full subscriptions
- Increase existing member participation

Targets

• **Current membership**

- Allied providers (distributors, retailers, software and service providers), ag retailers, crop nutrition, crop protection, feed industry, grain, precision agriculture and seed (primarily focused on agronomic row crops) segments of the agriculture industry.
- *Clarify current target goals regarding ornamental horticulture.*

• **Potential members**

- Other companies within the sectors above.
- *Clarify goals for reaching other sectors.*

• **Agriculture industry leaders in general**

- Ag corporate leaders, government officials interfacing or potentially interfacing with AgGateway projects, etc.

Tactics

1. Benchmark Survey

- Conduct benchmark survey of AgGateway awareness
- Begin by identifying and selecting a cost-effective professional resource
 - Determine target audiences, messages and metrics
 - Complete baseline surveys early in 2013
 - Determine the increased awareness goal with outside professional assistance
 - Develop communication plan for each audience

Timing: Feb. – identify professional resource and work with them to develop a schedule for implementation as soon as feasible in 2013.

2. Membership Drives

- Conduct drives in April and September
- Establish details: extra incentives for joining during drives, length of drives, etc.
- Promote through targeted letters, emails, newsletter, website

Timing: Develop details and communications in March and August to kick off drives early in April and September.

3. New Member Onboarding Tools

Finalize and implement a member “onboarding” plan to include:

- Materials/resources on the AgGateway website to encourage full participation in AgGateway and implementation of eBusiness within new member companies.
- Quarterly onboarding sessions for new members. (create orientation presentation based on new member deck and other materials). Plan for onboarding session for first week of March, June and Sept.
- Create presentations on critical topics that can either be given as separate webinars or included in the quarterly presentations, then saved and accessible on the website as podcasts. (May include such topics as how to integrate eBusiness within a company's corporate strategy, how to get started with eConnectivity, etc.)
- Better establish a mentoring program where current council members assist new members in onboarding.

Timing:

Website section for new members

- Discuss at March M&C committee meeting the resources that should be on this page
- Begin compiling and developing any content that is not already in this plan.

Orientation presentation for onboarding sessions

- Discuss at Feb. M&C committee meeting the content of this presentation (review a draft outline prepared by Susan)
- Complete onboarding presentation; determine who presenter(s) are.
 - include website orientation essentials as part of this presentation
- 2013 onboarding sessions – 1st week of March, June, Sept
- Upload podcast of orientation session on website - March

Critical Topic Presentations

- Discuss at March M&C committee meeting a presentation topic list, and develop a schedule for developing them and conducting webinars/creating podcasts

Mentoring program

- Create a brief description of mentoring program and what is expected
- Work with councils to line up mentors
- Have mentors personally invite their mentees to the orientation presentation, mid-year meeting, etc.

4. Website

- Complete updates as delineated as of Jan. 1 (includes newsletter archives, other site tweaks to fix since launch)
- Leverage use of photography and video
- Manage more closely, posting fresh content, easy-to-find content
- Add additional content:
 - New member orientation page/materials (see above)
 - Podcasts from webinars
 - Value sheets for each council
 - Education section/promotion

Timing:

Complete updates as delineated – Feb.

Leverage photo and video – Feb. and ongoing

Manage closely, add additional material – ongoing and as available

5. Video/AV

- develop a membership video
- develop a video promoting the annual conference
- post individual video testimonials

Timing: Membership video completed by end of Feb., testimonials by end of March, annual conference video by end of June

6. Newsletter

- o Evaluate content, layout, production
- o Leadership recognition – profile from each council, profile of individuals who have served for good length of time.

Timing: March review of newsletter and layout/production options. Leadership recognition – begin articles with March issues.

7. Media Relations

- o Clean/update/expand press list – put the list on Constant Contact
- o Connect with key editors to discuss their editorial calendars and opportunities for 2013; plan at least 2 guest columns/articles in trade press based on schedules
- o Press releases
- o Pursue feature in mainstream business media

Timing:

press list update - Feb/March

editorial calendar – Feb

press releases – goal of at least one release/month

pursue general media feature – research in April/May – perhaps hook with June meeting

8. Advertising

As part of the conversations with editors (above) explore opportunities for low-cost ad to run in select “friendly” trade press to promote 1) AgGateway and 2) the annual meeting. Try to identify in advance the issues where this is possible.

9. Social Media

- o Facebook (review Ray’s proposal), LinkedIn, Twitter

Timing: Evaluate options in March and work with M&C committee on next steps.

10. Leveraging Association Ties

AgGateway has 11 affiliate members – American Feed Industry Association (AFIA), Ag Retailers Association (ARA), American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), Chemical Producers and Distributors Association (CPDA), Council of Producers and Distributors of Agrotechnology, Crop Life America (CLA), Crop Life Canada, Independent Professional Seed Association (IPSA), National Crop Insurance Services, The Fertilizer Institute (TFI), GS1 US and OAGi.

- Susan to connect with the communications staff/function of each organization to discuss further means to communicate about AgGateway in 2013.

Timing: Discussions in March, work with M&C committee on next steps

11. AgGateway Meetings

Objective: Increase attendance at Mid-Year Meeting (June 17-20) and Annual Meeting (Nov. 12-14)

Mid-Year Meeting Tactics and Timing

- Home page promotion (done)
- Press release when registration opens (March)
- Newsletter articles prompting people to register; features of meeting not to miss (Feb.-June)
- Email promotions to register (Feb.-June):
 - 3/1 – Registration open
 - 4/1 – Registration/hotel reminder
 - 4/15 – Invite a trading partner
 - 5/1 – Registration/hotel reminder
 - 6/1 – MYM checklist
 - 6/8 – Final reminder/logistics details
 - 6/25 - Survey
- Reports out to Councils to encourage registration
- Consider trade ads (see above discussion with editorial staff on possible issues for free or discounted ad placements)

Annual Conference Tactics and Timing

- Home page promotion (Save the Date done)
- Press release when registration opens (July)
- Newsletter articles prompting people to register; features of meeting not to miss (July-Nov.)
- Email promotions to register (July-Nov) – insert schedule and topics
 - 4/15 – Save the date, link to promotional video
 - 7/1 – Nominate a GTAC student
 - 7/15 – registration open
 - 9/4 – GTAC nominations closing soon
 - 9/16 – **Begin weekly email blasts:** - Registered yet? Early bird rates, highlights
 - 9/23 – Last chance for early bird rates, keynote speaker
 - 9/30 – Reserve hotel room now/educational opportunities
 - 10/7 – See who else is coming, location highlights
 - 10/14 – Invite a trading partner
 - 10/21 – Keynote speaker, thank sponsors

- 10/24 – Early bird drawing winner
- 10/28 – It’s not too late to register!
- 11/1 – First time attendee lunch
- 11/4 – Checklist to prepare for conference
- 11/18 – Survey
- Reports out to Councils to encourage registration
- Consider trade ads (see above discussion with editorial staff on possible issues for free or discounted ad placements)
- Explore app technology

12. Awards Program

- Increase nominations – more promotion via emails, press releases, features of winners, member communications, highlight at MYM and annual meeting
 - Ron Storms – press release, email blasts (2 calls for nominations)
 - Explore ways to promote Ag Excellence Awards, trade association partner awards

Timing: Brainstorm with M&C committee in March/April

13. Individual Meetings

- Ensure that Rod and others have tools (Power Point, video, etc.) for one-on-one meetings with prospects.

Timing: Susan to discuss with Rod and Wendy in March and report back to M&C committee on any needs.

14. Trade Show/Conference Participation

- Update banners for specific industries
- Evaluate collateral; Consider updates/changes/additions to booth materials

Events:

See Master Calendar below

Master Calendar

Q1

Jan.

- Website improvements (e.g., newsletter archives, photos)
- Begin conducting research on firm to assist with benchmark survey

Trade events:

- Jan. 14-16 - Michigan Agribusiness Association 2013 Winter Conference and Trade Show, Rod attending, presentation with April Hunt on the Tonnage Reporting Project.
- Jan. 29-30 - AgConnect Expo in Kansas City, MO, Jim making presentation on the SPADE project.

Feb.

- Complete website updates as delineated as of Jan. 1; update Home page with new material
- AgGateway promotional video completed and posted
- Identify and enlist professional resource to assist with benchmark survey
- Discuss at Feb. M&C meeting content of onboarding presentation; complete the presentation and identify presenters; promote first presentation to be held mid-March
- Explore podcast possibilities (best way to capture/post the onboarding presentation)
- Begin compiling list of additional onboarding information needed for the website
- Create description of mentoring program for new members; enlist Councils for mentors
- Begin updating press list
- Complete drafts of Council Value Sheets – submit to Councils for their review
- Connect with key ag editors about their editorial calendars, opportunities for guest columns and discounted ads (especially in key issues and/or leading up to annual conference).
- Consider newsworthy material for a press release

Trade events:

- o Feb. 11-13 - ARA Board Meeting and State Agribusiness Assn Fly-In in Washington, D.C., Rod attending.
- o Feb. 18 - AAPFCO Committee Meeting in New Orleans, Rod attending and providing an update on the Tonnage Reporting Project.
- o Tentative: Feb. 25-27 - CPDA (Council of Producers & Distributors of Agrotechnology) Meeting, in Crystal City, VA, Rod may be attending.

Mar.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Discuss with Rod and Wendy any needs (collateral) for individual “sales call” meetings
- Prepare material and promotion for April membership drive
- Complete and post video testimonials to website
- Discuss at March M&C meeting topics for critical presentations/information that will assist members with onboarding/involvement
- Review newsletter production and content options
- Begin leadership recognition articles/profiles (award winners? Council chairs?)
- Complete update of press list and posting to Constant Contact
- Evaluate Facebook proposal and pros/cons of other social media engagement (esp. LinkedIn)
- Connect with communications staff/function at trade association partners to discuss further means to communicate about eBusiness and AgGateway; present findings at April M&C meeting.
- MYM: Issue press release and blast email on registration open; newsletter article
- Brainstorm with M&C committee ways to better promote the awards programs and get nominations

Trade events:

- March 11-13 - American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) Spring Committee Meetings in Fort Worth, TX, Rod attending.
- March 13-15 - Purchasing & Ingredient Suppliers Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, Rod attending and another AgGateway staff member may attend.

Q2

Apr.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Promote membership drive (eblasts, newsletter articles, website)
- Evaluate mainstream business media/journalists and prepare pitch. (e.g. Business Week)
- MYM promotion – eblasts (4/1) and Invite a Trading Partner (4/15), newsletter article
- Annual Conference – send eBlast Save the Date (4/20)

Trade events:

- CLA and RISE spring meeting – tentative (17-19)

May

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- MYM promotion – eblast (5/1), website, newsletter article

Trade events:

- United Fresh – tentative (14-16)

June

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Complete and post to website promotional video for the annual conference
- Conduct onboarding webinar week of 6/1
- MYM promotion – email blasts (6/1, 6/8), website, newsletter
- **MYM June 17-20**
- MYM eblast survey (6/25)

Trade events:

- GS1 Connect (10-13)
- ASTA Convention (15-19)
- EITA New Agriculture (27-28)

Q3

July

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)

Draft 2-7-13

- Annual Conference eblasts (7/1 – Nominate a GTAC student, 7/15 – registration open, link to new video)

Trade events:

- o OFA Short Course (13-16)
- o InfoAg 2013 (16-18)
- o Food Conference & Expo PMA (26-28)

Aug.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Prepare material and promotion for September membership drive

Trade events:

- o AAPFCO Annual Meeting (14-16) – tentative

Sept.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Conduct onboarding webinar week of 9/1.
- Conduct membership drive.
- Conference eblasts (9/4 – GTAC nominations closing soon, 9/16 – Begin weekly email blasts: - Registered yet? Early bird rates, highlights, 9/23 – Last chance for early bird rates, keynote speaker, 9/30 – Reserve hotel room now/educational opportunities)

Trade events:

- o CropLife America Annual Meeting (22-25)

Q4

Oct.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Conference eblasts (10/7 – See who else is coming, location highlights, 10/14 – Invite a trading partner, 10/21 – Keynote speaker, thank sponsors, 10/24 – Early bird drawing winner, 10/28 – It's not too late to register!)
- Press release on conference highlights

Trade events:

- o Fresh Summit Convention & Expo (18-20)

Nov.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Conference eblasts (11/1 – First time attendee lunch, 11/4 – Checklist to prepare for conference)

Draft 2-7-13

- **Annual Conference Nov. 12-14**
- eblast – Conference survey (11/18)
- Press releases on Conference success/Ron Storms/thanking sponsors; and new Board appointments, meeting dates for 2014.

Trade events:

- o Fertilizer Outlook and Technology Conference (19-21)

Dec.

- Update Home page with new material
- Consider newsworthy items for press release(s)
- Draft 2014 communications plan

Trade events:

- o ARA Annual Conference (3-5)
- o NGFA Country Elevator Feed Industry (8-10)

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