



# FARMERS FOR FACEBOOK

**T**imes have changed. Seemingly gone are the days of reading a newspaper at the kitchen table while eating a meal. Today, the newspaper has been replaced by a variety of social media technologies.

“I had no clue that I would ever use social media in my career,” said Braden Dockery, a recent agricultural communications graduate from Texas Tech University.

Dockery, like many other agricultural communications students, were required to use Facebook and Twitter in his agricultural communications classes at Texas Tech University. Dockery said he is now very grateful that his professors in college included the use of social media because he is now responsible for several professional social media accounts.

For his current job, Dockery is the company’s social media manager. He is responsible for updating the company’s social media networks on the company’s behalf but is primarily in charge of updating the company’s Facebook and Twitter.

“I use Facebook and Twitter as a means to guide traffic to our website and to increase exposure for our company,” Dockery said. “I am using social media multiple times a day for contests, press releases or simply timely status updates.”

Dockery is just one example of an agricultural communicator who adapted to use social media both in his college and professional careers. He

recalls being asked in detail about his social media experience at several job interviews upon graduating from Texas Tech.

“I was pretty confident in my social networking skills since I had experience with the less social and more professional side of social media through my agricultural communications degree,” Dockery said.

When asked what he thought about the stereotype of agriculturists and their lag of adopting technology, especially social media, Dockery responded quickly.

“You cannot tell me that people in the agriculture industry are lagging,” Dockery said. “Previous generations, regardless of occupation, may be slower

to pick up newer technologies, but industry has nothing to do with it.”

Dr. Courtney Meyers, assistant professor in agricultural communications at

*“It is a very interesting and empowering time in agricultural communications in that we have the ability to share our story.”*

Texas Tech, responded similarly.

“I would like to argue that in agriculture, we are innovators and adopters because of how advanced some of the farming technology is,” Meyers said.

Carolyn Baumgarten, the community manager for a social media marketing agency, wrote that she believes many agriculturists have made the change, despite popular belief.

“Sure, agribusiness often gets a bad rep for being ‘behind the times,’ but that assumption couldn’t be further from the truth,” Baumgarten said. “In reality, agribusinesses have embraced social media

as a channel that is revolutionizing both business-to-business and business-to-consumer communications for the industry.”

Meyers continued to say that she thinks this is a very significant time in agricultural communications, primarily because it is changing to include social media.

“It’s always scary to adopt something new.” Meyers said. “For farmers and producers, just like in agricultural communications, this is one more task that’s being asked of them.”

According to a 2011 study by the American Farm Bureau Federation, 98% of farmers and ranchers ages 18 to 25 have Internet capabilities and 76% of them utilize social media.

Like any tool, if social media is not used appropriately, then the use of this free, yet very effective communication tool is a wasted effort.

“It goes beyond just recognizing that people are using it to how can they use it and how can they use it well,” Meyers said.

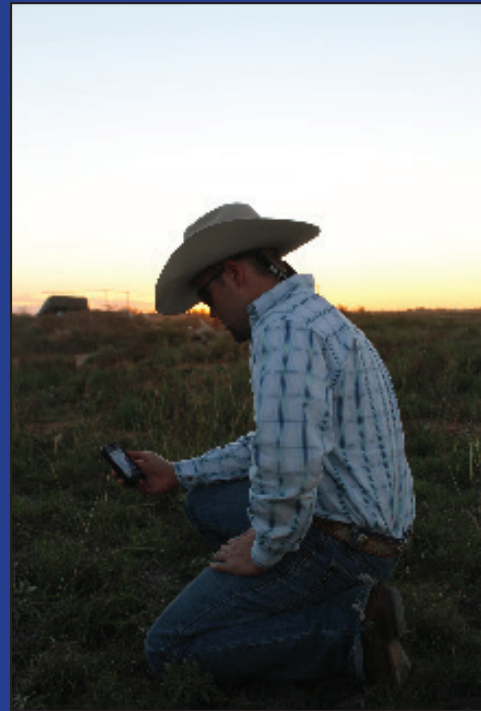
Social media is a unique channel for communication simply because it is up to the owner’s discretion as to what is or is not appropriate to post. It allows for instant freedom in communications, which gives the people a new power that differs from traditional media. Social media also allows agriculturists to communicate through unmediated channels to reach their audience.

“I think social media is interesting because it allows for something we haven’t had before and that’s for each individual person to have an outlet for their perspective,” Meyers said.

Agricultural communicators have an immense responsibility to communicate topics appropriately through relevant and current channels of communication. The ability to communicate correctly and professionally through social media networks is becoming more and more important.

Dockery said he believes that it is our responsibility, as agriculturalists, to promote our industry through social media. He went on to say that it is so important, now more than ever, to use social media in order to get others to understand just how important agriculture is, not just to them and their futures, but also to the whole world.

“Agriculture affects every single one of us because it determines what we consume and wear, how we live, how much it costs to live this way, and whether or not we live at all,” Dockery said. “I strongly believe that the agricultural industry, as a whole, and social media are absolutely vital to each other.”



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