



AG

2016 / 2017 • U.S. 10<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

Careers.com

# AG & FOOD CAREER GUIDE

**INSIDE: MORE THAN 25  
FEATURED AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS**

**YOUR FIRST JOB: MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE**

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# WELCOME



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## WELCOME TO OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



As we celebrate ten years of bringing this invaluable resource known as

the AgCareers.com Ag & Food Career Guide to students and young professionals, we thought it was time for a few updates. You'll notice a fresh cover design, plus the name change from Employer to Career Guide to better reflect the purpose of the guide – career education, and connecting people to the varied and numerous careers in the agriculture and food industries.

Inside this publication, you will find valuable job search and career tips, along with connections to top organizations in ag and food that are actively recruiting and hiring students and new graduates. We encourage you to review the employers' profiles to find

out more about their organization and their available job or internship opportunities.

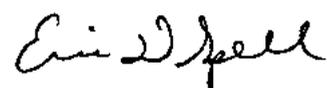
Useful articles featured in this guide will help as you navigate the job search process and begin your career. Articles cover topics such as interview questions, digital resumes, employability skills and mentoring. If you are considering higher education, examine the master's and continuing education programs highlighted in the guide.

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database. For more tips on utilizing AgCareers.com, check out page 15.

Download the recently updated AgCareers.com Job Seeker Mobile App, sign up for our weekly e-newsletter, and subscribe to our Career Cultivation blog, all FREE! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube to receive job search tips and take part in contests.

We are positive you will find this Career Guide and AgCareers.com to be instrumental in your search for an agricultural career. Please share this publication with friends and fellow students. Look for an easy to share electronic version on the AgCareers.com website under "Employer Guide Articles." It is an exciting time to be part of agriculture – good luck in your career search!



Eric Spell, President of AgCareers.com



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# DON'T LET YOUR RESUME HIT A

# DIGITAL DEAD END

by Bonnie Johnson, AgCareers.com Marketing Associate & Ashley Collins, AgCareers.com Education & Marketing Manager

**MOST RESUMES** are first submitted and viewed electronically today; is yours optimized for that process? Save your artistic flair for the printed copy you present to the hiring manager, because first, you must ensure your resume gets through a system known as an ATS.

Many mid to large employers utilize applicant tracking systems (ATS). In fact, 90% of jobs on AgCareers.com are redirected to apply through an ATS. These systems utilize technology to manage the influx of applications and electronically screen candidates to match the job for which they are hiring. The ATS assigns points to the different components of your resume based on an algorithm created by the hiring company. Resumes with the highest scores will get passed through to the hiring manager. The ATS “parses” resumes, which strips formatting out and pulls important words to sort into categories such as education, skills, work experience, and contact information. So how do you increase the chances your resume will score high?

## THE “KEY” TO A HIGH SCORE

**KEYWORDS.** Customize your resume for each job. Just like when you search the Internet and type in your relevant terms, employers’ systems are designed to do the same: search your resume for keywords that match the job they are trying to fill. Success will be based on your resume having relevant keywords.

So how do you choose the right keywords? Examine the posting and

description for unique keywords and phrases specific to that job. Try copying and pasting the job description into an online word cloud creation service (like Wordle.net). The larger the word appears in the cloud, the more times it appears in the job description. These words are certainly significant to the employer and are more important for you to build into your resume. You can also look at professional networking sites or professional summaries from other employees. Pull out phrases and keywords these other professionals are using that are applicable to you.

Include both the spelled-out version and acronyms for your education and professional organizations, as you can’t be sure which usage the ATS will look for. Examine the organization’s website for more information about their culture and values as this information can also be valuable to your resume.

But note that there can be too much of a good thing, so don’t overstuff your resume. It’s about using the right keywords and their uniqueness to the roles you’re applying for, not the number of times the word appears on your resume. Many systems put a value on related keywords and/or apply greater value to some keywords versus others as they relate to the specific job. So utilizing resources such as individuals who understand the company or role to help you identify those keywords is vital.

Above all, be honest: make sure you are only using keywords and phrases that represent the real you!

## 10 ELECTRONIC RESUME MUST-DO'S

- Use a sans serif font like Arial in size 11 point or larger.

### WORK EXPERIENCE



- Preferably save as a Word document (don’t use the header function).

- Use bullets as they are easier to read for ATS and for humans.



- Delete any graphics, logos or tables.

- Name clearly defined sections, such as “Work Experience” and “Education” that ATS can easily recognize.

- Do not begin a section with a date. Rather, for example, style as so:

**Greene Farms, Farmhand,**  
2010-12

- Avoid lines to separate sections.

- Include your full contact information (full address and zip code, as they may filter by geographic area).

- Remember proper grammar, spelling and punctuation!

- Save your resume as a unique file name, not just “resume”:

**AllysonParkerResume.doc**

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| Order Management       | Sales and Marketing | Veterinarian       | Computer Programming     | Electrical Engineering |
| Logistics/Distribution | Quality Assurance   | Accounting/Finance | Environmental Services   | Industrial Engineering |
| Information Systems    | Safety/Ergonomics   | Auditor            | Mechanical Engineering   | Food Safety            |
| Systems Analyst        | Microbiology        | Communications/PR  | Agricultural Engineering | Chemist/Biologist      |

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NATIONWIDE**

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Held annually at the International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE), the College Student Career Program connects hundreds of talented, bright college students seeking professions in the poultry industry with HR managers and recruiters. To participate or for more information, contact Barbara Jenkins, [bjenkins@uspoultry.org](mailto:bjenkins@uspoultry.org).

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Source: "High Level Expert Forum – How to Feed the World in 2050," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, October 2009.

# BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

by Ashley Collins, AgCareers.com Education & Marketing Manager

**ATTENDING YOUR CAMPUS** career fair can be key to securing your first career or internship. Unfortunately, many students skip this critical opportunity, or those that *do* attend are unprepared.

## GETTING PREPARED

A prepared student has dressed for success in professional and well-fitted clothing. Even if not wearing a full suit, their attire doesn't look like they picked it up off of their floor. Since they know they'll be on their feet, their shoes are professional yet comfortable.

They also have copies of their generic resume as well as customized resumes for specific employers. Be sure to keep these organized so not to give a resume with a competitor's name or job title referenced in the objective. They may also have a handful of personal yet professional business cards.

An unprepared student walks up to the booth and asks, "What does your company do?" "What kind of jobs do you have?" You should know these answers before the career fair, but sadly, most students use these as their intro questions. Every career fair publishes a list of companies in attendance. Many of those lists include company information, their website, and often titles for the roles they are recruiting for.

A prepared student takes initiative and does a little homework before the career fair. Beyond the basics, research the company's mission, competitors and clients, and if they have been in the news lately (and for what)—from

positive, reputable media. Take notes about the companies that you hope to visit and leave space to quickly jot notes following each interaction.

## ASKING THE QUESTIONS

Having thoughts and questions to review before approaching a booth will give you a conversation starter so you don't have to rely on off-the-wall jokes to "break the ice!" Also, this preparation will help the conversation flow and allow for more meaningful discussion.

Start with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a professional greeting. Have an elevator pitch prepared including your name, major, graduation date, and career objective. Practice this a lot—basic information about yourself can just disappear when you're nervous.

Then reference the open roles you've found they are recruiting for, the specific requirements and skills you'd bring to the role, and how the position fits your passion. Follow that with questions you have about the organization based on your research. For example, ask about the future of the company or the company culture. You might also ask about recognition or awards the company has received.

Remember to be conscientious of your time and the representative's.

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Before leaving, ask about next steps. If your conversation has gone well and you think you'd like to further explore employment, this is a critical step.

Offer a copy of your resume but understand if the representative directs you to their website instead. This is where those business cards come in handy. This also gives you a chance to ask for their card, which will be helpful when following up. They may also be staying to conduct interviews on-campus and you could sign up for a spot.

Now is the time to accept any material or swag item (notice item is singular!) that the company is handing out. Don't forget to find an area where you can jot down notes and review your notes for the next booth.

The simple act of attending and visiting with a few companies at a career fair will allow you to make significant progress in landing the internship or career you want. Going a step further by preparing will decrease your perspiration and increase your success!



Comic by Becca Schwartz



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# HOW TO USE Careers.com

Download the  
AgCareers.com  
Job Seeker Mobile App



## SET UP AN ACCOUNT

- Click “Set Up Your Profile” under the Job Seeker drop-down menu at the top of the page.
- Enter your contact information; uploading a resume and cover letter at this point is optional.
- Browse and apply for jobs or internships, update your profile, view saved jobs, view your application history, and post your resume so employers can seek you.



## APPLY TO A JOB

- Once you have searched for a job and viewed the description, click “Apply to This Position.”
- Add your email address. If you create an account, you may streamline this process and record your application in your application history.
- Fill out the required fields. Attach an optional cover letter by clicking “Browse” or copy and paste into the text box.
- Attach your resume in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format by clicking “Browse.” You may also select a resume from your account if logged in and if you have uploaded a resume.
- Click “Submit Application.”
- Some employers may require applicants to complete the application process on their site. If this is the case, you will see a note in a red box and be redirected. Follow directions given on their site.



## POST A RESUME

- Login to your account. Select “Post Your Resume” from the main job seeker drop-down menu at the top of the homepage.
- Fill out the resume profile form on the new page. The fastest way to fill in the “Resume” box is to copy and paste your resume from a Word document.
- You also have the option to upload a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file by utilizing “Upload Resume File” below the resume box. Browse and select from your documents.
- Click “Preview Resume.” If you need to make changes, click the back button. Once satisfied, click “Save & Exit” at the bottom.
- You can update or add resumes any time by clicking on “Manage Resumes.”

# 4 WAYS TO SEARCH



Conduct a simple search by typing keywords in the first search box at the top left of the homepage.



Search by location using the top box labeled “Job Location” or by using the interactive map on the homepage.



Search by industry type by selecting the industry from the drop-down menu in the top box labeled “Industry Type.”



Conduct an advanced search by clicking on the “Advanced Search” option in the top right corner of the homepage.



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# 5

# EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND HOW TO DEMONSTRATE YOU HAVE THEM

by Ashley Collins, AgCareers.com Education & Marketing Manager  
& Erika Osmundson, AgCareers.com Director of Marketing & Communications

**TO TRULY COMPETE** in today's job market you need more than a diploma. Employers are looking for the total package; candidates who have the education needed to understand the job, the experience to carry out the technical duties, and the employability skills to be successful.

Let's begin with a quick overview of what employability (or soft) skills are. The term refers to attributes that a person encompasses that allow them to interact effectively with other people, particularly in the workplace. These traits have often been attributed to success on the job, but as the competition for talent increases, specifically in the agriculture industry, demonstrating and highlighting these types of skills throughout the job search and interview process can be a way to set yourself apart from the competition.

A full list of these soft skill traits could easily be in the hundreds, so for now, we will focus on five critical skills employers seek in new graduate hires.

## 1. COMMUNICATION

Hands down, this is a foundational skill that most employers would rank as the number one necessary soft skill in new hires. Your ability to listen effectively and communicate appropriately and accurately with your manager and coworkers will have a tremendous impact on your career success.

You have several opportunities to demonstrate your communication skills to a potential employer. The first may be at a career fair or other networking event. Being prepared by researching the company before the event will start your verbal communication off on the right foot. Having some familiarity with what the company does and general knowledge regarding the types of openings they have will allow you to ask more informed questions and be more relaxed in conversation.

Additionally, if you have mentally prepared and rehearsed, you won't sell

**“EMPLOYEES WHO UNDERSTAND THAT THE WORK THEY DO IS ONLY A SMALL PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE BUT OF IMPORTANCE IS SOMETHING VALUED BY EMPLOYERS.”**

yourself short nor be too long-winded. This will demonstrate that you are capable of filtering information and communicating important components in a concise and effective manner.

## 2. SENSE OF URGENCY

Do you wait to be given a task or do you realize there is a problem and resolve to be a part of the solution? As one would imagine, employers are looking for go-getters, those who are willing

to come in early, stay late, go the extra mile, ask how they can help, etc.

Employees who understand that the work they do is only a small part of a bigger picture but of importance is something valued by employers.

Early in the process, demonstrate that you encompass a sense of urgency by how quick you follow up with an employer. Especially in today's technological world, there are very few excuses for not returning an email or phone call in a timely manner.

When you reach the interview stage make sure you research the company and come prepared with a list of great questions. Establish next steps in the process before wrapping up your interview. Taking the initiative to drive the process shows that the company and opportunity are important to you.

## 3. PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism is a pretty broad skill that includes everything from the way you dress, your vocabulary, your reaction to workplace situations, and more. Professionalism can mean hitting your internal mute button when tempted to share your opinions in situations where you don't have all of the information or when things are changing quickly in the workplace.

Additionally, professionalism is about how you develop relationships in the business setting such as understanding the line between personal and professional interactions with peers and your manager. Also be conscientious of sensitive information that you've been

entrusted with and don't divulge that information in inappropriate settings.

Your physical and verbal reaction to constructive criticism and how you apply that feedback impacts professionalism. Demonstrate these traits once you have a job, but you can practice those while in college and use examples in your job search.

Consider the clubs or organizations you are affiliated with. Involvement shows that you are well-rounded but equally demonstrates your ability to build connections, perhaps even with the professional arm of the organization and/or alumni. Leadership roles within organizations also allow you to encounter similar situations to the workplace, such as receiving/giving constructive feedback, to utilize as examples during an interview.

Professionalism can also be demonstrated during the interview itself. Beyond the importance of the basics, how you treat each person you encounter will say a lot about your character and professional competence. It isn't uncommon for the receptionist to be asked their opinion of a potential candidate. As the saying goes, "treat the janitor with the same respect as the CEO!"

Lastly, consider how you react when you aren't offered the position. Thanking the company for the time invested throughout the process and maintaining the connections you made will certainly boost your professionalism and may even open a future door!

#### 4. LIFE-LONG LEARNING

For a company to progress, their employees need to continue to grow as well. Those who are committed to continual learning are typically the first to receive projects, career growth opportunities, salary increases, promotions, or additional job offers.

You may be thinking that you're learning all you can handle at the moment but you can begin to develop the desire for life-long learning while still in school. Take classes outside of your major like conversational Spanish, personal finance, or leadership. While you may think these electives may not advance your technical job training, they will help you learn things that will make you more competitive in the professional world. Talking about these class experiences while networking or at an interview will demonstrate for the employer that you have a desire to learn.

Life-long learning can easily be achieved just by reading. There are thousands of professional development books available to help you grow as a young professional. Mixing a few of these into your summer reading list will provide you with insights and theories you can practice in the workplace or discuss during networking opportunities.

#### 5. PROBLEM SOLVING/DECISION MAKING/NEGOTIATION

Problems arise daily in the work environment, both large and small, and each one has some impact on the

successfulness of the business. As an employee, you must be able to identify the problem, take the appropriate action, negotiate the outcome and realize the consequences of those decisions.

Your interview should give you ample opportunities to validate your problem-solving abilities. Almost every employer will ask you some type of behavioral-based interview question(s). These are designed to highlight how you behaved in a situation (problem) to predict how you'll perform when faced with similar situations on the job. "Tell me about a time..." or "Give me an example of..." are typical ways these questions start. This is your chance to quickly explain the problem you were faced with and how you took initiative, utilized your resources and got results.

Demonstrate this skill to your employer by not only coming to your manager with a problem but also your proposed solution. This shows respect for your manager's time but also your desire to make the right decision by working through a problem and asking for input.

Employability skills are certainly a determining factor for success in the workplace and as young professionals, it can be hard to understand the importance these skills play for employers. Demonstrating that you have these skills and focusing on them during the interview process, along with your technical expertise, will help set you apart from the competition!



**PROBLEM SOLVING**  
Tina Dorner, CHS, Inc.

"When you understand how to identify a problem and can sort out the options to select the best solution, both you and the organization are successful."



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# TRANSLATIONS

by Bonnie Johnson, AgCareers.com Marketing Associate

**WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES** are employers REALLY looking for when they ask interview questions?! We hope to provide some translations and suggestions so you can eloquently answer these common and sometimes tricky questions.

## TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

“Employers use this information to gain an understanding of what you are passionate about, what makes you tick and drives you,” said Sarah Rachels, Human Resources Director, Carolina Farm Credit. “Feel confident in sharing a story that will help us remember you over the others we are interviewing.”

Be wary of turning this into a 20-minute speech; keep it to a quick overview as it relates to the job. Don't delve into your hobbies or personal issues. Relate your answer to the skills that you can bring to the position.

“Articulate your story in a concise manner that is relevant to the job,” said Jessica Johnson, Talent Acquisition Manager, Lansing Trade Group.

## WHAT IS YOUR WEAKNESS?

It is important to be honest and show a little humility. “I like it when candidates can tell me a weakness, as it shows they are self-aware,” shared Johnson.

“Continue your answer by sharing a specific time when you worked to improve a weakness,” said Rachels.

## TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU MADE A MISTAKE.

“Many employers promote a learning

culture and are understanding when an employee makes a mistake, as long as they take responsibility and learn from it,” said Rachels. Use an example that demonstrates that you can apply what you've learned from mistakes. “I want to know how accountable you are, and hear what you've learned from your mistake,” said Johnson.

## WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

Research the company and know the career path. Johnson shared a response that impressed her: “I want to complete the MIT program and become a successful merchandiser, contributing to the organization as a whole.” It is important to be realistic and honest with the interviewer. If your goals and the organization's don't match, it might not be a good fit for either. “Turnover is very expensive to employers, and they want an idea of whether or not they can depend on you to utilize the countless hours invested in your training and development,” shared Rachels.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Now is your time to gloat a bit and share an accomplishment. “Oftentimes having

a degree is a requirement for a position, so answering with ‘getting my degree’ probably isn't enough,” said Johnson. Did you pay for college by yourself? Did you receive a grant for research? Even if your example was a team project, describe your efforts and the results. Share goals that were accomplished or exceeded.

## IT'S IN THE DETAILS

“Remember that an interview should be a two-way conversation,” added Johnson. Be prepared with your own questions to make sure the position is the right fit for you.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of researching a company before the interview,” added Rachels. No matter what the question, if you want to be a successful candidate, “Use specific examples whenever possible,” added Johnson.

As a college student or recent grad, you may think you don't have experience. However, your examples can be from school, part-time jobs, internships, activities or volunteer experiences. Keep in mind you are selling your “story” in the interview, and you are the author and expert!



Comic by Becca Schwartz



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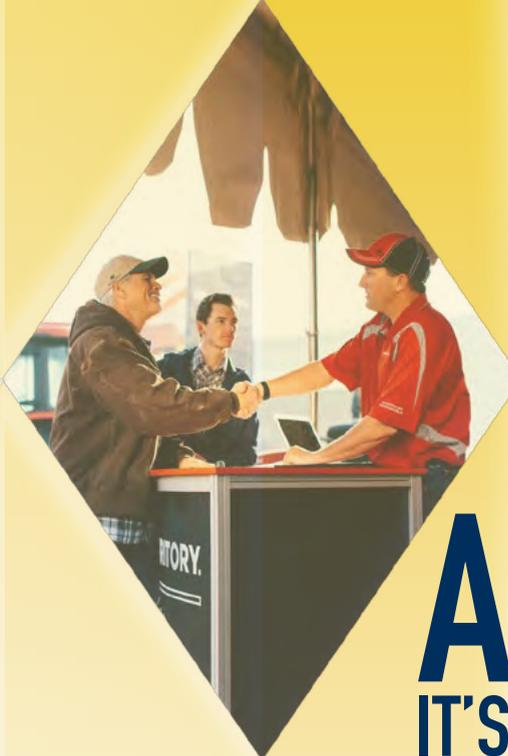
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# YOUR FIRST JOB: MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist

**GRADUATION** is imminent. The time is at hand: it's time to start thinking about your first job! You may be brimming with questions. What should you look for? What are important decision-making factors and what aren't? And really, how important is your decision? How much pressure is there to pick the

right first job? While there may be no right or wrong answer, there are many things to consider before you make your final choice (once you get to that point). Tomesah Harrison of Bayer and Jennifer Struck of DuPont Ag & Nutrition share advice for new graduates considering their first jobs.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE?

It's important to be happy in whatever you do, so new graduates often approach their first job determined to find the perfect position. Take the pressure off: making the right choice for your first job should not be a stressful experience but rather one of openness and excitement.

"I believe it's important for new grads to evaluate their options but don't get too anxious about your first job choice," said Harrison. "Every experience brings learning, and the first job is guaranteed to be one of many for new graduates."

Struck also emphasized that students shouldn't stress about finding

the "right job" but the right job for this time in your life.

"As a person grows in their career, the right job will change," Struck said. "Many times, we have higher expectations of what we can do when in reality, we need to start somewhere to learn the ropes. I always challenge students to step outside their comfort zone when leaving college because it's the time that they are more likely to be able to do so."

Consider taking a career in an industry you may not be as familiar with. Explore opportunities in a new location that you may not have considered.

In many scenarios, a new graduate may not be presented with job openings that match their idea of a dream job. You may find yourself feeling forced to apply to whatever's open including positions you may not be at all passionate about. But know that it's not as dire as you think.

"I'm not sure there is a 'dream job,'" Harrison said. "There are aspects of every role that we really love or dread."

"There are many times when people work in roles that they would not consider ideal," Struck said. "However, after being there, they are able to find a new passion or see their career taking them in a different direction. You will learn and take something from every experience that will then help you land the ideal role."

You may decide your first role really isn't for you, and, as it's been said, that's fine. Just beware of job-hopping.



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE HOPPING

## JOB-HOPPING

If you are not familiar with the term “job-hopping,” it is best defined as spending a short amount of time in one position before taking a new one. Often, those who are considered serial job-hoppers will take more than four different jobs in ten years. While this trend has been around for decades, neither Struck nor Harrison are concerned by it.

“I think we’ve instead tried to focus on creating the right experiences and opportunities that stimulate this desire to do something different more frequently while contributing in a meaningful way,” Harrison said. “When you are able to do this well, you satisfy the desire for a job change within your own four walls.”

Job-hopping allows an individual to be exposed to multiple opportunities but it can also create headaches for your employer left to pick up the pieces once you’ve left. More so, you could be cheating yourself out of learning all that you could from a short employment.

“The bigger challenge is when a person hops from job to job with no semblance of reason,” Struck said. “It could be company to company, or into various areas. This can have a negative impact on the candidate as companies may think they are not going to be dedicated to the organization or role long term.”

Both Harrison and Struck agreed that between two and three years is a good time-frame to experience a career before considering a change. The first

year is a learning experience in which you are able to fully understand your role.

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHOICE

You can look at salary figures, health care, or workplace perks, but all companies are ultimately going to offer you a solid package. Struck insists that the culture of the company, the team you will be working with, and other non-monetary components are more important when considering a new role.

“You will be spending a significant amount of time with the people you work with and the company, so it’s important a student considers whether the organization is one they would be proud to work for and would refer friends,” Struck said.

Beyond the culture, also consider how the organization could help you achieve your professional goals. Like all things, your goals will likely change, but it’s beneficial to go into a new role with aspirations in mind and how this new role could aid in achieving them.

“The opportunity to learn and grow represent the intangibles that can really make a difference in regards to a person’s career trajectory,” Harrison said. “Career development has been a huge focus for us at Bayer and we see the return in our engagement scores and retention of great talent.”

Harrison said that she has seen good working environments “springboard” employees into involvement outside of

What am I **MISSING** in my current role that I want in the next one?

Does this really require a career move or am I able to seek **ADJUSTMENTS**?

Have I **LEARNED** everything I can from this role? Have I **ACCOMPLISHED** all that I wanted to in this role?

Is this new role I’m considering the best role for me **AT THIS TIME**?

Does this new role help me achieve my personal **GOALS**?

their own areas and share their skills throughout the organization.

“I’ve seen many young professionals actually get exposure to senior leaders and other opportunities through volunteer efforts or supporting a passion area that also was a key initiative for the business,” Harrison said. “Don’t let the current job description define or limit you in terms of how you deliver or behave.”

Ultimately, you may end up finding that your first job isn’t for you. But the decision to make the most of it—to learn, to grow and to experience—is entirely up to you. Make the choice to never limit yourself no matter where you may find yourself and to accept every opportunity as a new adventure.

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# WHAT'S IN A Mentor?

by Megan Carlin, Agriculture Future of America Marketing & Communications Manager

## BEHIND EACH OF OUR SUCCESSES

is a strong system of mentors, who push us and help polish us. Perhaps the most influential time for mentors to give us a leg up is during those first few years in the professional world.

Mentorship – both having a mentor and serving as one – is an essential value of Agriculture Future of America's Alliance for young professionals. Alliance member Ty Littau says he appreciates his mentors who have challenged him and kept him grounded. Fellow Alliance member Ellen Gilliland says mentors not only push her but also help her set boundaries and seek needed rest.

"I appreciate that my mentors have been concerned with my personal life as well as how I perform professionally," she said.

Agreeing, Jon Calhoun says, "A good mentor is genuinely interested in finding what your interests are and helping you get to the next level."

## FINDING & DEVELOPING MENTORSHIP

Each relationship looks different. Some develop from traditional supervisor-employee roles. Gilliland, project manager for Ohio Corn & Wheat, says her supervisors have been some of her best mentors. For Littau, having a strong mentor relationship with his colleagues was one of the reasons he left his home state of South Dakota and took his

current position as legislative correspondent with Senator John Thune in Washington, D.C.

"It's important when you make a large change that you have some idea of who you will be working with and who will be crafting your perspective," he said.

Calhoun also said his mentors are part of the reason he moved from Oregon to Nebraska to work with Union Pacific Railroad where he is now a sales manager. As a new hire, he was assigned a seasoned mentor within the company.

"I found that valuable; and I found even more value in informal relationships that grew organically because we had common goals," he said.

Sometimes mentorships start when you say, "I respect you. I would like to consider you a mentor." Others begin as you ask people in your network for advice on specific decisions.

"It takes a certain amount of time to figure out who you are dealing with and what their mentality is. Some of my relationships have been fairly formal," Littau said. "With others though, we simply talk on a regular basis."

With her supervisors serving as mentors, Gilliland said they never specifically set mentorship expectations. However, she did have one supervisor who was also a close friend. In that case, she said, boundaries were important.

"We labeled our conversations, 'this is a work conversation, this is a friend conversation,' so we were clear and

could pull from the correct set of expectations," she said.

Whatever the case, your relationship will benefit you if you are intentional in your conversations, said Littau. Calhoun adds that for the relationship to be mutually beneficial, you need to be open and willing to receive feedback.

"At some point, hopefully, you can begin to sharpen each other based on strengths and weaknesses," he said.

Always seriously consider and apply your mentor's advice, Gilliland says.

Littau recommends sharing the specific things you admire about your mentor and explaining how you think they can help sharpen you.

"Within the professional world, we are hard up for encouragement and positivity some days," he said.

## PASSING IT ON

Littau says he has learned more about mentorship by *servicing* as a mentor.

"What they need is a safe place to process and encouragement," he said. "I can help them zoom out and take out some of the emotion and dig into what is substantive."

Calhoun agrees saying he enjoys mentoring the newest hires at Union Pacific who have a drive similar to his. "I want to be a liaison between the person and Union Pacific and make sure they have the best experience possible."

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## SHINING A LIGHT ON

# women IN AGRICULTURE

by Kristine Penning, AgCareers.com Creative Marketing Specialist

**KRYSTA HARDEN**, a farm girl from Georgia, has dedicated her career to helping American farmers through various roles in the U.S. government, ultimately serving as Deputy Secretary of the USDA alongside Secretary Tom Vilsack. Throughout her 30-year history in agriculture, she admits that women have not always been treated equally in the industry, but she has never let that stop her from reaching her goals.

"There are times still when I am the only decision-maker at the table who is female and that is changing," Harden said. "In the past, I didn't have the automatic acceptance that some of my male peers had; I always had to earn it. There have been times I felt that my ideas or concerns were dismissed or even ignored because I was a female. I found I had to work harder and to always make sure my facts were correct and I had every detail just right. There was no room for even a minor mistake. I was raised by parents who helped me have confidence to be that different voice and to contribute even though it may not always be comfortable or easy."

While both men and women today would tell you that the perception of women in agriculture has changed for the better, a 2015 study done by AgCareers.com sheds light on the issues still faced by women in agriculture. More than 2,000 responses indicate a disparity in pay between genders with men typically earning more than women. Harden, who now serves as the Vice

President Public Policy and Chief Sustainability Officer with DuPont, recognizes that women are sometimes hesitant to ask for what they deserve.



"It's not always comfortable for women to ask for raises or promotions," Harden said. "It can be hard to recognize your own worth when others are making you feel less. I believe strongly that women need to help other women. We need to be fair to all candidates but certainly should be encouraging women to apply for key positions and help mentor them for growth at the highest levels."

Despite a wage and hierarchy gap in agribusiness, this study also revealed that more than 90% of both men and women believe that women are an integral part of agriculture.

"Women have always been involved in agriculture yet our roles haven't been valued as much as they should," Harden said. "The good news is the awareness of women's contributions is changing."

Harden said she is excited about the future of agriculture knowing that more and more women are getting involved.

"Not everyone will be on a farm or ranch and they will contribute to the industry in other ways," Harden said. "We need researchers, communicators,

79% of women felt there was gender inequality in agribusiness. Just 47% of men felt the same.



1/2 of women surveyed said they had experienced blunt sexism at work.



49% of women felt they would be better compensated if they were male.



70% of women hoped to advance to a higher level role one day.



80% of both men & women felt the attitude toward women in ag has changed for the better in the past decade.

policy makers, nutritionists, marketers, economists, conservationists, teachers... the list is long and jobs are available!"

Her advice to young women in ag?

"Look at your opportunities, not your limitations. You can do it. And there are other women and men here to help. We need and want your voice, your energy, your ideas, and your passion!"

You can view the full "Gender Roles & Equality in Agribusiness" survey report on [agcareers.com/reports.cfm](http://agcareers.com/reports.cfm).



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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Time to rethink your career direction? The AgCareers.com University Partners program provides universities with graduate and distance education programs in agriculture the opportunity to reach out to students and professionals. Find out more about these programs: click on the University Partners icon on [www.AgCareers.com](http://www.AgCareers.com).

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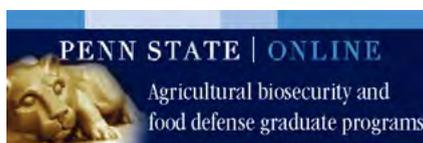


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