

Introduction

My name is Kelley Davenport. I started with Old World Industries (OWI) in February of 2018 when the predominately retail and commercial automotive functional fluid manufacturer/distributor decided to venture into the agricultural industry. We introduced a new brand of functional fluids, BlueAg, by rebranding some of their current products and began offering them to agricultural customers. About a year later, we started an LLC of OWI – Old World Specialty Products (OWSP) – and expanded our portfolio to include granular ammonium sulfate and spray grade ammonium sulfate. During this new venture, I worked closely with project managers, IT groups, transportation, etc. to get everything set up in SAP for this new company. We now have three full time employees – me, a Managing Director, and a Sales Director of New Business and Product Development – and three independent sales contractors. I function as all other roles – sales (of the automotive functional fluids), procurement, inventory management, logistics, purchasing, marketing, new customer onboarding, etc.

“What Does Leadership in Agriculture Mean to Me?”

Leadership has changed over the past several years. It no longer has to do with having authority or direct reports. It is more of a social influencing role with a goal. Leaders set direction and help themselves and others move forward. Through times of rapid transformation, it can become increasingly more challenging to know the “right direction”. This is the challenge in today’s agriculture. The market is saturated with experts but is rampant with a lack of general management expertise and strategic thinkers who can empathize with the views and concerns of all stakeholders. Leaders in ag should be motivators for a progressive agricultural community and advocates for agricultural issues facing our communities.

Many individuals in influential positions today, do not understand the inner workings and challenges facing the agricultural community. It is the task of agricultural leaders to educate and transform communities, organizations, companies, and government policy makers on the needs of the agricultural sector through leadership. Effective leaders will inspire others to help them advocate for changes that need to be made. To accomplish these goals, it is imperative that agricultural leaders be good communicators, have integrity, make decisions, be accountable, and show commitment and passion.