AGRI-MARKETER OF THE YEAR

By Tom Funk, Professor Emeritus, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph, Founder and Past President Agri Studies Inc.

The 2019 recipient of the Canadian Agri Marketing Association’s (CAMA) Agri Marketer of the Year is Justin Funk, Managing Partner of Agri Studies in Guelph, Ontario. For over 18 years, Justin has managed a thriving business while working hands-on with members of the North American agribusiness industry. His experience has solidified his position as the leading expert in agriculture sales and marketing education and allowed him to design and deliver learning and development programs for some of the industry’s top organizations.

While agri-marketing traditionally focuses on advertising, an often overlooked and under recognized area is personal selling. Many marketing strategies are designed to be implemented by salespeople who are responsible for interacting with farmers while attempting to communicate the company’s value proposition.

Over the years Justin has worked with thousands of sales professionals, hundreds of sales managers, as well as product, brand and marketing managers in the industry classroom with a goal of helping these organizations create, communicate and deliver value in a more meaningful way.

His clientele spans the industry and includes the seed, crop protection, plant nutrition, animal nutrition, animal health, equipment, and financial services sectors in both Canada and the United States.

Through his career, Justin has devoted much of his time to understanding agricultural salespeople, their customers and the roles they play within their respective organizations. This has involved conducting first hand, experiential research by spending time with salespeople as they interact with customers.

Justin understands the issues, challenges, and key success factors that impact the ability of salespeople to excel at their jobs and is able to use these insights to develop teaching material tailored to suit the needs of his clients. His ability to understand and communicate sales concepts and buyer behaviour insights with the newest to most seasoned salesperson has been a major contributor to his success.

In addition to his work with clients, Justin is responsible for the development and facilitation of Agri Studies’ Agribusiness Marketing Management Programs which include Marketing to Farm Businesses and Strategic Agri Marketing. These courses have become staples in the industry with participation from over 600 unique individuals over a 10 year timeframe. In addition to his work in the industry classroom, Justin is a veteran in the academic classroom having taught at all levels at the University of Guelph, most recently in the MBA in Agriculture Program. He currently holds a faculty position teaching executive programs in marketing at the Center for Food and Agricultural Business at Purdue University.

Justin is also an experienced marketing practitioner. He actively works with clients to coordinate marketing research activities designed to collect, analyze, and report information from the market with the goal of helping to shape customer-focused sales and marketing strategies. His efforts have produced some of the more important and impactful research conducted on farmer buying behaviour, salesperson/customer relationships, and understanding of decision-making dynamics of multi-generational farms.

In 2010, Justin designed an update to the “Large Commercial Producer Study” first fielded by Purdue University in 1993 and the University of Guelph in 1994. This groundbreaking research has been the basis for the most successful marketing strategies in U.S. and Canadian Agriculture.

In 2016 Justin led Purdue University’s Multi Generation Farm Study that explored farmer buying behaviour on farms involving more than one generation. Justin has also facilitated a number of dedicated research studies and facilitated strategic planning activities for clients. His expertise in distribution channel design and management, pricing, branding and product management have allowed him to assist in strategies for many products currently being sold.

Justin is a long-standing member of CAMA. For two years he served as President of the Ontario Chapter and served as the CAMA National Committee Chair from 2009-2018. In this position he oversaw many important changes including the development of the National Committee, standardization of the Best of CAMA and the creation of the National Executive Director position. In 2012 he was awarded the NAMA Professional Development Award of Excellence for his contributions to both CAMA, and the agri-marketing industry at large.

Justin is a lifelong resident of Guelph where he is a proud father and husband.