

CAFA article for magazine 2012

There has probably never before been such a need for farm advisors as at this present time. Whether it's providing succession/transition or business/management advice, many Canadian producers are seeking the best possible information to take their business to the next level or forward into the next generation.

The internet can be a great source of information for anybody or any business, but those same producers need the guidance of a professional advisor to help disseminate all that information.

Although CAFA professionals benefit from networking opportunities, they have to be encouraged to make use of their CAFA designate by ensuring that their potential clients are aware of the benefits of using a CAFA professional. This has to be the reason for CAFA membership. Producers are well known for talking to each other [networking!] and will recommend successful components to improve each other's business.

In that instance farmers are the some of the best advisors and the information is free!

So following up from that, if as an advisor, you have provided favorable and useful advice to a client, it is very likely that you will get a referral. This is by far the best compliment a person can receive. So given the fact that there are networking opportunities for professionals at chapter meetings and conferences etc, it only makes sense to engage in networking with these successful people.

So what are producers looking for in an advisor? They want professional personnel who are reputable and known to be knowledgeable about their subject of expertise. They want to know that their farm business information will be treated in confidence, that the advisor will be time sensitive in setting and maintaining deadlines and that they are receiving value from that advisor.

So where is the producer likely to find this type of professional person? By using an advisor that has the CAFA designate, producers will gain the services of personnel who:-

- a) Have the opportunity to improve the level of advice delivered through networking at chapter meetings, attending conferences where speakers address topics of common interest and advisors interact with other professionals and producers.
- b) Have access to educational upgrading from newsletters, chapter meetings, conferences and online resources.
- c) Are required to maintain their certification through the system of ongoing professional credit requirements

CAFA's National Mission is to continually improve the quality of advice being given to producers and their families, including agribusiness

So for producers seeking specialist advice, they can benefit by using a CAFA professional as:-

- a) A way to identify farm advisors who have made a commitment to provide quality advice to the farm sector
- b) An opportunity to network with advisors and share information with them
- c) Dealing with advisors dedicated to the farm sector, who adhere to a professional Code of Ethics and Standards, who agree to meet continuing educational requirements and who maintain Errors and Omissions insurance
- d) Improved quality and level of service

One of the best ways for a professional, whether they are a CAFA member or potential member, to improve that level of advice to producers is to attend the provincial conferences which will provide information on current and local topics as well as the chance to network and interact with other like-minded professionals. To this end, the board agreed to the suggestion of provinces putting on 2 conferences per year. Thus by using differing locations, it immediately opens up the possibility of easier access for most members. As well as benefiting from the educational value, this is a great opportunity to accumulate some credits, particularly for those members whose chapter may not be meeting on a regular basis.

About 85% of listed advisors have a farming background of some description. This puts them at a huge advantage when working with a producer. The one thing that bugs a producer is talking to a professional who knows very little about the day to day running of a farm. The next generation of advisors may likely not have that direct link. It is imperative that we pass on our experience and continue to educate the upcoming advisors.

I thank the board for their support during the year, particularly our treasurer whose contribution is invaluable. Also, as ever, thanks to Liz for the immense amount of work she contributes on behalf of our organization.

Roger Mills CAFA National Chair