



Industry Communications

Background

Beginning in 2001, the overall objective for what was then called Industry Outreach was to increase industry awareness and support of the USPB's programs.

The USPB added the strategy of engaging the industry in those programs in 2004. With these strategies in mind, Industry Outreach created and maintained proactive partnerships with state potato organizations, as well as worked to help the industry achieve responsiveness to the USPB's strategies and programs. The USPB worked to engage USPB Board Members in their state organizations and to build relationships directly with their state organizations. Communications were developed to show how industry leaders have used the USPB's information and programs to create benefits in their businesses.

Electronic newsletters for growers, state organizations and trade media were created. The USPB developed a new database for easier and more effective communication with the industry, working with all departments to build this database for all programs.

In 2006, the fully-staffed Industry Communications & Policy Department (ICP) was created with the goal of segmenting communications, by each of the five production segments, to continue communicating the breadth and depth of the many USPB initiatives, domestically and internationally, all designed to increase demand of US potatoes and potato products. The "Maximizing Return on Grower Investment" tagline and www.uspotatoes.com web address were incorporated as the two central anchors in all ICP and grower-directed communications efforts, while using the following four strategies...

1. Continue to raise awareness and understanding of the tagline, "Maximizing Return on Grower Investment", among all growers that are the source of funding for the demand building programs of the USPB and are receiving an ROI on their investment in the USPB.
2. Communicate the USPB's role in increasing demand for potatoes and potato products, by each of the five production segments, while supporting the industry as a unified whole.
3. Communicate USPB's programs and strategies to growers, utilizing the Segmentation Communications Plan, in a manner that is directly meaningful and beneficial to the specific grower segment and geography.
4. Communicate the ROI growers receive from their investment into the USPB in this targeted manner.

Beginning in FY2012, a fifth strategy is added:

5. Experiment with new methods of engaging growers by increasing the reach and penetration of current communications messages and experimenting with new communications channels

These strategies will continue to be accomplished via a comprehensive, multi-layered, multi-faceted, segmented communications program was created using a complete USPB Brand Identity effort (tagline, graphics standards, website address); strong Internet presence at www.uspotatoes.com; a stable of electronic newsletters including the semi-monthly *Industry Update*, bi-monthly *Fresh Grower-Shipper Update* and semi-annual *Sector Highlights*; print editorial/public relations; print advertising; broadcast sponsored programming and public relations; trade shows, industry meetings and annual Farm Visits by participating staff; and the USPB Report Section in the NPC Statistical Yearbook.

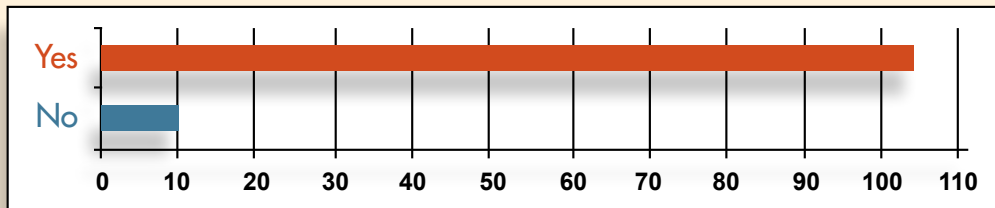
As indicators of the success of the new Industry Communications program and strategy to create industry-wide awareness and understanding of all USPB programs, the 2009 Grower Survey, compared to the 2005 Grower Survey, showed:

- The overall job approval rating of the USPB was up significantly, as growers giving the USPB favorable ratings of excellent or good rose from 73% in 2005 to 83% in 2009, while unfavorable ratings fell from 19% to only 10%.
- It must be noted the 10 percentage point increase came as the result of converting “Don’t Know/Not Sure” growers from 8% in 2005 to 7% in 2009. However, more noteworthy, is the fact those rating the Board’s work as “Not Very Good or Poor” was significantly reduced from 19% in 2005 to just 10% in 2009.
- During the USPB’s 2009 Annual Meeting, Board Members of the USPB voted overwhelmingly to increase the assessment rate by ½ cent. The proposed assessment rate increase received broad support across all potato producing regions, with Board Members voting by a margin of 91 percent in favor of increasing the assessment rate.

Further, noted during the FY12-FY16 LRP Industry Input Survey, when asked, “As potato growers, do you feel you are adequately informed about the programs of the United States Potato Board (USPB) to build long-term demand for potatoes and potato products”, the following result was registered:

Yes = 92%* No = 9%

**Rows may not equal 100% due to rounding*



Challenges

Communicating to the Industry

In order for Industry Communications to achieve the primary **strategy of informing growers so they can leverage USPB strategies, programs and activities**, the USPB will continue to focus on communicating directly to growers in a way individually targeted to their specific business needs. For many years the USPB sent out communications with a general message to the entire grower population, but this effort disenfranchised certain sectors of the industry. When a general story is told, an unintentional message is sent that money invested from one segment of the industry is used to support another segment. The unintended consequence of this is some growers feel we do not do enough to help them, we are only helping others. Research since 2006 provides clear evidence this perception has been almost completely reversed, thus, our Segmented Communications Strategy will not change.

Engaging the Industry

While the new Industry Communications program and strategy to create industry-wide awareness and understanding of all USPB programs has been successful, as briefly enumerated above, the challenge remains, and will always be such, to fully engage the industry to incorporate USPB research findings and programs into their individual potato enterprises. The US potato industry is extremely diverse across the five production segments, not to mention geography, and all with competing individual market share objectives, often at cross-currents with the overall “good” of the



entire US industry. While these challenges will probably forever remain beyond the direct control of the USPB to effect complete change and influence, the USPB Industry Communications program will continue to aggressively and constantly seek ways to improve delivery of and engagement by the industry of USPB research and programs.

Resolution

Inform growers so they can leverage USPB strategies and programs

A Multi-Layered, Segmented Approach

Over the course of this LRP, Industry Communications will continue to communicate USPB's strategies and programs to growers utilizing a Segmentation Communications Plan that will allow us to communicate what is directly meaningful and beneficial to each specific grower segment.

Industry Communications will continue to communicate the USPB's role in increasing demand for potatoes and potato products, as well as supporting the industry. The USPB will continue to communicate the ROI growers receive from their investment into the USPB in this targeted manner. Work will continue to raise overall awareness of the tagline, "Maximizing Return on Grower Investment", among growers so they better understand they are the source of funding for the demand-building programs of the USPB and are receiving an ROI on their investment in the USPB.

The USPB will achieve this strategy via a Multi-Layered, Segmented Approach:

1. Industry Communications will continue to communicate with growers in a targeted manner, by production sector, through direct-to-grower communications programs such as trade shows, meeting participation, electronic communications and updates and annual, geographically diverse Farm Visits by participating USPB staff during the spring, summer and fall.
2. Industry Communications will continue to communicate with growers in a targeted manner, by production sector, through non-paid editorial in trade publications and state and national potato organization publications.
3. Industry Communications will continue to communicate with growers in a targeted manner, by production sector, through paid trade advertising in the two national publications, Spudman and Potato Grower, and a specially directed, but scaled back, advertising campaign toward Washington State frozen process growers in Basin Business Journal.
4. Industry Communications will continue to communicate with growers in a targeted manner, by production sector, electronically through the www.uspotatoes.com website, continuing to position and market the website as the central repository of all current and archived information on USPB strategies, programs and accomplishments, and via our stable of electronic newsletters.

Over the course of this LRP, Industry Communications will focus on using these tools to communicate the USPB's strategies and programs in a meaningful way to the entire industry. Industry Communications will work to communicate the USPB's role in increasing demand for potatoes and potato products and supporting the industry. Industry Communications will also communicate the grower's ROI from USPB programs and how to utilize the USPB's programs and strategies in their own businesses.

Industry Communications

<i>Growth Strategy</i>	<i>Productivity Strategy</i>
<p>Target communications to growers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Production Segment • Develop, utilize and periodically revise the Segmentation Communications Plan to deliver messages • Communicate ROI from USPB programs and strategies to each grower, by production sector • Experiment with new methods of engaging growers through new communications channels 	<p>Communicate USPB's strategies and programs in a meaningful way to each grower based on their individual production sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize tagline to deliver ROI awareness among growers • Always organize all communications by production sector



Policy

Background

The former Policy & Management Committee operated during FY2004-FY2007 under the following objectives:

- To conduct ongoing review of USPB policies
- Maintain a positive working relationship with USDA
- Present any proposed changes in the governance or structure of the USPB to the industry for discussion prior to their winter meetings.

Under these objectives, the committee began to set time each year to visit with USDA on industry issues. This was timed to coincide with the NPC Public Policy Conference and the Industry Communications & Policy Committee's participation in the Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) in Washington DC in late February. This allowed the committee to begin building a relational foundation with the NPC as well.

With the establishment of the fully-staffed Industry Communications & Policy Department in 2006, these basic objectives remained unchanged, albeit with more comprehensive and stronger engagement of the industry by the ICP staff.

The overall objective of the Policy function of the Industry Communications & Policy Committee, over the course of this LRP, will be to "position the USPB to conduct business".

During the FY2007-FY2011 LRP, and to continue for the FY2012-FY2016 LRP, the policy function of Industry Communications & Policy operated with the following expanded objectives:

- Ensure USPB Policies & Procedures remain current and reflect Board activities and ongoing operational requirements
- Continue to strengthen relationships with USDA and other State & National Industry Organizations to ensure industry cooperation and overall singularity of purpose
- Ensure all Board Members receive current USPB Articles of Governance and updated information as available
- Smooth and transparent process to elect New Board Members
- Overall, "position the USPB to conduct business"

Challenges

For the USPB's overall strategy to be successful, the USPB has to be completely credible in the eyes of the industry. This credibility should exist not only in the research that supports the program implementation – but in accountability to the industry as well. This Committee moved beyond responding to issues as they came up – to becoming more aware of how their role fits in the planning process and proactively engaging issues in their earliest stages. The Committee serves other committees through the governance support needed to implement their programs to the expectations of the industry and within the boundaries of the "Guidelines for AMS Oversight of Commodity Research and Promotion Programs", as well as to both the letter and intent of the "Potato Research and Promotion Act", "Potato Research and Promotion Plan", "Bylaws of the National Potato Promotion Board" and "Board Policies".

To accomplish these objectives, a deeper level of communication and engagement, not only with the other Committees/Departments of the USPB, but also with State Organizations, NPC, USDA and other Industry Organizations was absolutely critical to both the continued long-term success of the USPB and the US Potato Industry for all participants.

Resolution

Continue to achieve a higher level of communication and engagement

The Committee developed significantly more depth in relationships already established with USDA and NPC. By working in partnership with the other committees, stronger relationships were developed with State Organizations as well. The Industry Communications & Policy Committee will continue to work to achieve a higher level of communication and engagement, not only with the other Committees/Departments of the USPB, but also with State Organizations, NPC, USDA and other Industry Organizations.

Continue to be proactive

Continue to move beyond responding to issues as they come up, to becoming more aware of how the Committee’s role fits in the planning process and proactively engaging issues in their earliest stages

Maintain credibility

Continue to support the conduct of business and interaction with the industry so as to maintain and further grow the credibility and value of USPB programs to the industry

Develop appropriate and equitable policies

Through stronger relationships with the industry’s State Organizations, it has become much more efficient and commonplace to get information out quickly and with ample time for discussion should any changes in the structure or governance of the USPB be proposed.

At its best, the role of the Policy function of the Industry Communications & Policy Committee is to ensure policies and bylaws are in place that are capable of “protecting” the USPB and its’ activities from any legal criticism or from Policy-based criticism from within or outside the industry. This gives strength to the organization and creates an environment where the USPB can conduct the business of “Maximizing Return on Grower Investment”.

Facilitate Board Diversity

Continue extensive discussion and dialogue with the State Potato Organization Managers regarding USDA’s increased emphasis on Board Diversity

Policy	
<i>Growth Strategy</i>	<i>Productivity Strategy</i>
<p><i>Continue to achieve a higher level of communication and engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With USPB Departments • With USDA • With NPC Board of Directors • With State Organizations • With other industry organizations <p><i>Continue to be proactive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage issues in their earliest stages <p><i>Maintain credibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the conduct of business and industry interaction to maintain and further grow USPB programs’ credibility and value to the industry 	<p><i>Develop appropriate and equitable policies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to serve other committees through the governance support needed to implement their programs to the expectations of the industry and within the boundaries of all Articles of Governance • Communicate to the industry proposed changes in governance • Facilitate a document of policies that accurately represents the USPB’s activities. <p><i>Facilitate Board Diversity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue industry dialogue regarding USDA’s increased emphasis on Board Diversity