

Web Application Forecasts Corn Yield

Technology and agriculture have been no strangers in recent years. A Purdue Research Park-based company is among those combining the two.

Optimizer 2.0 is a site-specific yield model developed by Advanced Ag Solutions (AAS) that is making itself well-known since its February 2012 launch. It placed second in *CropLife* magazine's 10 Best Mobile Agriculture Apps for 2012.

The web application allows farmers to project corn yields based on soil, weather and seed properties. Daryl Starr, founder and CEO of AAS, says, "The app's reception has been stronger than anticipated. Since its launch, we now have more than 1,000 users in 27 states."

AAS unveiled a new feature called "Solver" in February, which provides farmers with an algorithm to determine the correct amount of seeding and nitrogen. Starr adds that while currently the focus is on corn, "We are very tentatively scheduling for a 2014 soybean model crop release."

Starr maintains that as the web application continues to grow in popularity and is increasing its already high accuracy,



"We are just getting our feet wet in technology, but we are growing substantially every day."

Resource: Daryl Starr, Advanced Ag Solutions, at www.advancedagsolutions.com

Law School Applicants Falling Fast

A mix of fewer jobs and rising costs to enter the profession is not a good combination.

The Law School Admission Council reports that the number of students applying to law school has declined 38% since 2010. Law schools are expecting to receive 54,000 applicants this year compared to 100,000 in 2004.

The average debt that a law school student accumulates reached a high of \$125,000 in 2011. To accompany this financial challenge, only 55% of law school graduates found full-time jobs after passing the bar exam.

Efforts are being made to combat these issues. In New York, it has been debated whether to allow students to take the bar exam after two years rather than three. Northeastern Law School in Boston, which has had one of the smallest decreases in applications, emphasizes hands-on training as a major component of its final year of education.

With the number of students attending law school in the fall (after dropouts) expected to be 38,000 – the lowest since 1977 – schools are being forced to resort to layoffs and staff buyouts. A University of Chicago Law School expert says that if these trends continue, as many as 10 law schools will have to close within the next decade.



In for the Long Haul

Retirement at age 65 is not an option – or intentional choice – for many people.

Rather than leaving the workplace at that age, many Americans desire to remain on the job for quite a bit longer. According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, the number of workers age 75 and older has soared nearly 77% in the past two decades.

Those employed in this age range have a number of differing careers – 25% in professional lines of work, such as doctors, and another 25% in retail positions. In addition, 88% of employees who are within five years of retirement are willing to acquire new skills.

The opportunities for older workers, however, are not always promising. In 1990, there were 11,000 unemployed workers age 75 and older. In 2011, the number of unemployed American workers at this age increased to 75,000, AARP reports.

Workforce Wise is an initiative of the Indiana Chamber Foundation that focused on employer preparation for the loss of workplace knowledge. It included a series of studies and *BizVoice*® stories. It stressed, among other points, strategies that companies can successfully employ to accommodate older workers and benefit from their expertise.

Resource: Learn more about Workforce Wise at www.workforcewise.com

Shorts written by Katie Wyss

Too Much of a Good Thing?

Consumers like low prices, right? Not always. Reims Management School (RMS), one of the top business schools in France, conducted a study which found that low prices can sometimes have adverse effects on the consumer.

It was discovered through three experiments – consisting of 662 subjects – that if an offer seems too good to be true, the consumer may become suspicious and no longer wish to purchase the product or service.

Amy Shoup Mennen, vice president of Shoup's Country Foods in Frankfort, believes this does happen. She spoke about it in regard to the company's 90% lean ground beef product.

"We have a ground beef called Lean Supreme that is

more expensive than our competitors' ground beef, which has a higher fat content. We made a ground beef with a higher percentage of fat and lower prices to compete. However, consumers would try it once and go back to the higher-priced beef because they were suspicious that the lower price was lower quality. You get what you pay for and customers realize this."

Adilson Borges, head of the Value and Persuasion Research Center at RMS, notes that a price guarantee (refunding the difference if a lower price is found) is satisfying to customers. An offer, however, that promises much higher reimbursement levels sends a negative impression and makes consumers wary.

Resource: Reims Management School at www.reims-ms.fr

The Road (More or) Less Traveled

The Census Bureau measures many areas of Americans' lives. The Indiana Business Research Center at IU's Kelley School of Business recently analyzed and summarized Census statistics regarding work commutes.

In the 10 largest cities in Indiana, slightly less than half (ranging from 45% to 63% in individual cities) of workers live less than 10 miles from their job. Evansville and South Bend were at the 63% level; Indianapolis and Fishers at 45%.

On the other end of the scale, 15% (with a range from 11% to 21% in the 10 cities) drive 50 miles or more to get to work each day. Bloomington tops that list, with 21% of people who work within the city travelling at least 50 miles to get there. Only 11% in Hammond have the long-distance commute.

Separately, the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, which tracks well-being in the United States, United Kingdom and Germany, conducted a daily tracking series that explored worker engagement levels in relation to their commute to work. The index found that 14% of American workers stated that it takes them 45 minutes or more to get to work.

Gallup links long commutes with poorer well-being, which can negatively affect the workplace – especially if employees are not enthusiastic about their work. Others, however, have offered that the longer commute can prove beneficial in separating work and home lives.

Resource: Indiana Business Research Center at www.ibrc.indiana.edu



Quality over Quantity

Does it make sense for an employee to receive more recognition for staying late in the office when they achieve the same results (or fewer) as the co-worker who left at the end of the workday? This erroneous system is a byproduct of the widely used eight-hour workday.

Measuring performance by the clock may not be the best way to determine who your star employees are, particularly in a knowledge-based business. Richard Pozen of the Harvard Business School and Brookings Institution offers strategies to improve productivity, increase results and take the focus off the time spent on task.

- Avoid long, unproductive meetings. Stick to previously outlined discussion topics
- Use your time wisely in reading materials – skip sections that are not relevant
- Don't be a writing perfectionist. An outline and a rough draft will help speed along the process

Generate a good relationship with your boss. Communicate often and show through performance that your supervisor can trust that you will generate the desired results – independent of the typical work clock.