WORDS OF WISDOM FOR EXTENSION MIDDLE MANAGERS

Second Edition

Introduction

Being an Extension District Director or Middle Manager has often been described as the most difficult job in the organization.

Extension middle managers are often charged with supervising a large number of employees with diverse personalities that are dispersed over a broad geographic region. Extension middle managers maintain partnerships with numerous local government entities, and work to maintain positive stakeholder relationships as well. Managing complex, cyclical budgets are part of the job, as is hiring, training, and evaluating employees. These challenges and opportunities require middle managers to be strong yet compassionate leaders, motivators, facilitators, and negotiators, among many other talents.

Recognizing the importance of knowledge sharing and mutual support, Words of Wisdom from Middle Managers…for Middle Managers is a project that the Southern Region Middle Managers first took on as part of their Plan of Work for 2011 - 2012.

As part of the 2015-2016 Plan of Work, revisions and updates were planned for the existing document and a committee was charged with updating this resource during the Middle Manager's Committee sessions at the 2015 Southern Region Program Leadership Network Meeting in Orlando, FL.

Questions were routed to all Southern Region Middle Managers for input. Responses were organized by topic and compiled with minor editing to correct typographical errors and reduce duplicate information. The resulting draft publication was peer reviewed by Middle Management Program Committee members during the August 2016 PLN Meeting in Nashville, TN and reflects their input.

In summary, whether you are a new or experienced middle manager, there is something we can all learn from each other. It is our hope that the following pages provide some useful tips, or serve to reinforce your current thinking.

Revision Committee Members

Blake Lanford
Regional Lead Agent – Coastal Region
Clemson Cooperative Extension
259 Meeting St. Charleston, SC 29401
(843) 902-5182
blakel@clemson.edu

Brenda G. Rogers
District Extension Director
South Central District
University of Florida IFAS Extension
Plant City Campus
1200 N. Park Road
Plant City, Florida 33563-1540
(813) 757-2195
(941) 713-0739

Judy Ashley
Northeast District Extension Director
University of Georgia
300 Hoke Smith Bldg.
Athens, GA 30602
(706) 542-3179

Table of Contents

Questions on the following topics were routed to all Southern Region Middle Managers for input. Responses are organized by topic and compiled with edits.

Describe any traditional and/or non-traditional strategies your institution uses for recruitment of Extension staff.

☑ We use traditional methods and have increased digital recruitment efforts.

☑ Attend University career fairs.

☑ Candidates are directed to an online application system. Several job search engines are used to advertise - Monster, CareerBuilder, Inside Higher Ed Professional Journals and Professional Organizations.

☑ Traditional recruitment strategies such as internships, positions announcements on job boards, advertisement in professional journals and local media sources seem to be the most fruitful when identifying prospective employees.

☑ All vacant agent positions are opened for internal transfer for seven days prior to advertising through traditional methods. For the past 5 years Virginia Cooperative Extension has sponsored approximately 30 summer interns and this program has resulted in the hiring of about 5 to 10 new extension agents who participated in the summer intern program.

☑ We participate in job fairs, and speak to classes routinely. We also offer approximately 30 paid internships throughout the year, most during the Summer as a recruitment tool. We do involve Agents on District based Recruitment Committees and ask them to help at job fairs and to speak to classes as often as possible.

☑ Work with College and Universities with the degree we are looking to hire. Building relationship with the department heads and have them assist you in finding good students for our agency.

☑ Job openings are placed on GreatJobs website. Presentations are given at Universities/Colleges on Career Opportunities with Extension Participation in job fairs in urban areas.

☑ County Agents are hired by District Directors. County program assistants and secretaries are hired by the County Staff Chair. No recruitment efforts.

☑ We try to attend career days at local Universities in the area. We split up and cover our own area of the state. I've established some key relationships with the deans in FCS and ANR schools in the state. I usually drop them an email when we have positions available. This has been a great source for excellent candidates.

☑ Web posting.

☑ Kentucky - We make extensive investment in our Extension Summer Intern Program. This gives both potential employee and potential employer a chance to take a look at each other. Approximately 30% of current agents were also Extension Summer Interns.

What method of interviewing applicants has worked well for you?

☑ I use a diverse, 5-person search committee with a follow-up phone interview. Prior to the interview and after candidates are screened by HR - the search committee rates the applicants.

☑ I ask each applicant to make a 10- minute Power Point presentation on a pre-determined relevant Extension Education program topic, as part of the interview process.

☑ Candidates present a 15-minute seminar on the program area they are applying for. We invite internal staff and key stakeholders

(advisory leaders, county partners) to this part. An interview team of the DED, CED, State Program Leader or Extension Specialist, and sometimes someone from the County HR to ask behavior-based questions for 30 minutes.

☑ Though our recruitment methods may be considered traditional (i.e. journals, job boards, online posting, etc.), we are utilizing technology to an increasing degree to offer interviews for candidates in other areas of the country. Media platforms such as SKYPE are used to reduce the number of in person interviews that are conducted. In person interviews are expected of local candidates and offered to all out of state candidates in addition to nontraditional web based interviews

☑ We have recently begun asking applicants to give a brief presentation on the subject of their choice. This not only gives insight into the applicant's ability to deliver effective presentations, but also how comfortable the applicant will be in an agent role. We have also found that the interview process goes a little quicker as the presentation serves as a good icebreaker.

☑ The use of a first-round telephone interview process has nearly eliminated bringing weaker candidates to the face to face local interview. All local interviews are conducted as a panel interview with representatives from VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION and local

government. All candidates prepare and deliver a presentation on a topic requested by the District Director.

☑ We try to focus interviews on behavioral questions and place the applicant in scenarios that make he/she think. This sometimes helps to avoid the practiced, canned answers that they are conditioned to give. When possible, we involve the District Administrator as the lead, but also include the Regional Program Leader and the local staff, at least in a second interview.

☑ Use a consistent list of questions that causes the applicants to think and process before answering.

☑ We use a standard set of questions developed by Extension to conduct in person interviews and Skype interviews.

☑ Generally, face to face at the county office - District Director and county staff chair.

☑ I prefer conducting personal interviews in the county office where the vacancy is located. I think this is much better than interviewing in the regional/district office. I have found phone interviews to be useful in initial screening but not effective when trying to identify a primary candidate. ZOOM has proved to be excellent for interviewing candidates from far away locations. Much better than phone interviews!

☑ I have begun requiring applicants to make a 10-minute power point presentation during the interview, on a relevant topic to their position for which they are applying.

☑ We use Go to Meeting. Because writing is so important we request that the candidate be involved in a short writing assignment, giving them an Extension publication and asking them to write a 300-500 word "web post" they have internet access during the 50-minute exercise, most of the time it gives good evidence to confirm selection of top candidates.

✓ Kentucky - We use a multi-level interviewing system. Our HR Personnel Director conducts phone interviews and narrow potential candidates (2-4) for face to face interviews. The face to face interviews are conducted with 4-5 people and we have recently added a 5-10 minute presentation/demonstration to the face to face interview, which we really like.

Any tips on checking references on applicants?

✓ It seems that looking for people to call that are not listed has worked well for me; supervisors listed but not on the reference list.

✓ Use a University Telephone Reference template to conduct reference checks.

✓ There is nothing particularly creative about a "cold call". However, the 5 minutes it takes to do it may help identify an intangible issue that the conventional application and interview process completely overlooks or fails to identify.

✓ This remains to be a challenge as most references only provide positive comments and are less likely to identify areas where a candidate could make improvements.

✓ Ask as many questions as they will allow. Ask about work ethic, character, timeliness, professionalism, judgement, etc... The subject matter will surface quickly, it's the personal traits that are sometimes hard to uncover in an interview. We also will snowball reference check, asking previous

employers who may not be listed as a reference, and asking listed references if they know anyone else we should talk to. The area where we need to improve is checking social media accounts, this is likely the best way to really see their character and personality.

✓ Check the references from past employers that they might not list. Seek individuals that might know something about the applicant.

✓ I always ask for another "unlisted" reference I could call. This is helpful. I like to keep reference check info on SharePoint or some kind of share format that the entire search committee can see the data.

✓ We always call the most immediate employer; I check for any online information.

✓ Kentucky - All references should be checked of course. We have a standard electronic reference form. The reference receives an email with a link to the online form.

2 Describe any formal or informal new agent training techniques that exist within your organization.

✓ We use an on-boarding process with several steps and mentors are assigned to each new hire unless it is a transfer.

✓ Arkansas has a formal mentoring program that lasts one year. Also, there are written guides for the new employee and

supervisor for the first year of employment to guide the supervisor in onboarding the new employee. We have a few online courses for new employees as well as face to face onboarding training.

✅ One-day orientation soon after they start, two to three day fundamentals training during first six months. We are developing a new onboarding and mentoring process presently.

✅ We have a new agent mentoring system that pairs new agents up with a team of assigned mentors who meet regularly with new agents across the state. Subject matter training is also offered new agents as part of their respective program unit i.e. 4H new agent training. All new agents are provided start-up resources to accommodate costs associated with additional training opportunities pursued in the first two years on the job.

✅ A 2-3-day new agent orientation is held on campus. Periodic program reviews are conducted at 3 months, six months and 12 months.   Mentors are assigned to each new agent - typically from the same district and same program area.   Agents are encouraged to visit with all counties in their district within the first year.

✅ Our Region has four new agent training sessions held quarterly that all new agents participate in. After they have worked a year, they will have been through all four sessions. We have BEST *Building Exceptionally Skilled Teachers*, which has two online modules and one face -to-face trainings. Every new agent is required to complete this in the first three years.

✅ All new agents attend a new agent orientation on campus immediately following their hire date. All new agents are assigned an agent mentor for at least one year. All new agents work closely with their District Program Leadership Team and attend local training throughout the year. The District Program Leadership Teams coordinate First Fridays which is a WebEx based training that is open to both new and experienced agents on the first Friday of every month.

✅ We have a fairly systematic onboarding system for all new agents. In most cases our new hires spend the first 30 days in a shadowing capacity in a neighboring county, prior to starting work in their home county. They also are assigned a mentor for a period of one year. Our training sessions consist of: Program Excellence Academy - 2 sessions, four days each, that focus on Program Development, Delivery and Evaluation. These sessions are conducted centrally, and all new agents come together from across the state. We also conduct Regional Training, called the 4 Ps - People, Programs, Partnerships and Professionalism. This three-part series focuses more on the "Soft Skills" that make an agent successful.

✅ On-boarding training, training in district setting and also us of mentors through-out the new agent first couple of years.

✅ Onboarding which includes First Step, DEA meetings, Regional Program Leader meetings, 4H specialist meetings. Mentors. Quarterly trainings by the region utilizing experienced agents, speakers, administrative persons Academy of Extension in the fall and spring.

✅ Arkansas has a formal Onboarding process. All agents have an assigned mentor. There are specific expectations for the staff chair, mentor and new agent. Monthly Mentionable sessions via Zoom. Conducted by PSD.   Filling Your Extension Toolbox training conducted by PSD. 4 days Core curriculum training. This year a Peer to Peer training was conducted for new Ag agents.   It was rated as the BEST training for new agents by the participants.

✓ We have a statewide organized mentoring program ran by a mentoring team consisting of Extension employees. We do different things from region to region. The Central Region in TN has a new agent cohort that meets quarterly to cover training topics. We also do some online training for new staff. TN is in the process of developing soft skill competencies and develop new hires training programs based on soft skill assessment.

✓ We have a formal orientation and mentoring period of 1 year for new county agents with handbooks for (1) New Employee, (2) Supervisor (3) Mentor.

✓ Currently two - two-day sessions on campus for all new Extension faculty, very few state faculty attend. One two day sessions with new Extension, Research and Teaching faculty one time a year.

✓ We have a combination of face to face and online "on boarding" steps that new agents must complete. New Agent Orientation, New Agent Training, online learning modules.

Please include any links to resources you use in your new agent training.

http://ces-personnel.ca.uky.edu/new-agents
Passwords are required
http://www.intra.ext.vt.edu/staffdev/
onboarding.tamu.edu
http://agrilife.org/od/employee-development/extension-onboarding/
New Employee Welcome Center
https://uofaces.wordpress.com/

http://ces-personnel.ca.uky.edu/

3 What methods are used to reward excellent performance through your institution's performance appraisal process?

✓ We have a Career Ladder protocol available (I, II, III level system) with an 8% raise at each level.

✓ Merit raises based on rating score and an in-county promotion system through the levels of Agent I, II, III and IV (distinguished agent).   Merit raises are usually small. Promotion from Agent I to II is currently $3,500 to base salary and $4,500 from Agent II to III.

✓ No formal mechanism exists for rewarding performance that is rated as excellent. The priority need related to a formal merit-based award process is a cited in the current strategic plan.

✓ Salary improvements based on performance.

✓ The merit raise system allows District Directors the opportunity to provide larger raises to the highest performing agents.

✓ We have recently tied our performance appraisal system directly to our career ladder promotion system. This was a big step for us, and one that will truly recognize performance and not simply writing ability. In recent years, all of our salary increases have been merit based, tied directly back to the performance appraisal and their final rating.

✓ Very little salary increases and some paid time off.

✓ Merit raises, Administrative Leave Days, Awards.

✓ Some years when raises are given they are performance based, some year cost of living.

✓ Kentucky - We have a career ladder with 5 levels to which agents can apply. There are salary increases associated with each level. Merit salary increases, based on

performance are also utilized. We also support agent professional organizations.

Do you have any successful strategies for dealing with difficult or unsatisfactory performance appraisals?

☑ This is a big topic and one that we all could write a book on. By far and away - moving forward with a Performance Management Plan and dealing with the issues quickly and concisely is key to reaching successful conclusions.

☑ Verbal and written warnings are used, and have been successful in turning some people around.

☑ Start with the positive and gradually build a conversation around the specific areas that you feel the employee can improve upon. Be willing to accept some push back and offer tangible examples of steps that may be taken to improve performance. Have this conversation scripted in your mind prior to the formal appraisal.

☑ Good documentation, very specific and focused plan of improvement.

☑ All agents are encouraged to provide written responses to their evaluation back to the District Director.

☑ There should be no surprises in a performance appraisal conference. If an employee is taken aback by a score or a rating, we have not done our job in coaching throughout the year.

☑ Place the individual on administrative review and develop and growth plan for the individual. This takes time and effort of both parties. You must check and follow up often.

☑ Work with the agent to develop a performance improvement plan. Meet regularly.

☑ Follow through on conducting performance improvement plans. I think it is important to stay on top of these situations. If employees are not showing improvement, procrastinating the exit process hurts everyone involved.

☑ We set up a personal improvement plan for all faculty that receive below a "satisfactory" rating.

☑ Start early. Don't put problems off, they just become bigger problems. Get help - talk to other District Directors for ideas, HR specialist....

How do you address the separation of administrative vs programmatic duties in a performance appraisal?

☑ Our Performance Evaluation document has these sections broken out nicely and we can discuss each job duty area separately.

☑ Most CEDs are required to do administration and have programmatic responsibilities. We have several cases where the CED is responsible for two counties, thus only administrative duties.

☑ Percentages are assigned to individual job duties. All employees report to a job duty that is related to their specific position based on their job description.

☑ County directors are scored in specific criteria which are in a section of the performance appraisal for county directors only.

☑ Virginia Cooperative Extension has an evaluation matrix that includes indicators for both administrative and programmatic duties, therefore agents can be evaluated on both sets of duties.

✅ Our system is clearly delineated into programmatic areas and administrative areas. While our scoring system places more weight on programming, areas such as accountability are clearly highlighted as important. Other areas such as volunteer management, office management, fiscal management, etc... have their own sections and allow for a good discussion on the importance of these skills in a total program.

✅ I am not sure if you can 100% of the time.

✅ Regional Program Leaders provide input for program performance, works with agents to be successful District Administrator does the performance review, assigns ratings for merit raises, works to help agents be successful.

✅ In some performance areas staff chairs have different standards than agents.

✅ We have PA divided into areas as follows: 1) Program Planning 2) Program implementation and accountability 3) Professionalism 4) Administrative (For county directors).

✅ For our County Extension Directors, it is all included in their appraisal.

✅ Kentucky - We breakdown the agents job into separate "Major Job Requirements". Some relate to programming and some relate to administrative functions. Each MJR is weighted and evaluated separately.

4 **Please share any BMPs on remote supervision of staff to assure accountability?**

✅ A difficult task for sure. Best BMP here is to hire good people and let them work. Other than that, meeting privately and in groups, listening to their colleagues, conducting regular training in person and digitally, and seeking client input has worked well for me. Trust is key - they need to trust me and I them - never operate off half of the story and they need to know I have their back. When this happens, they are very up front with their issues. I generally have very few problems.

✅ North Central Administrative Team weekly update.

✅ A tremendous amount of trust must be placed in agents supervised remotely. A tiered administrative process ensures that a local contact is able to work jointly with the regional supervisor to oversee office operations and individual performance. County Coordinators are asked for individual input during evaluations processes. Inevitably problems arise on rare occasions and should be dealt with promptly.

✅ Communication is the key. Look for as many opportunities to interact with agents throughout the year. Attend as many local programs as possible. Attend agent quarterly meetings.

✅ This really varies, depending on the individual and how much supervision they might need. In any case, communication is the key to success. Even with the top performers, a consistent plan to communicate is essential. I believe that attending/observing programs should continue to be a top priority for supervisors.

✅ Just monitor reports, drop in visits, schedule one on one meeting throughout the year.

✅ Review of Texas Data System Reports LYNC meetings when appropriate Emails.

✅ Traditional reports and paperwork. Quarterly staff chair Zoom sessions.

✅ Regular contact. Regular county director meetings. Organized county visits to meet with staff and address concerns.

☑ We have a County Extension Director in each county.

What communication techniques do you use to ensure organized engagement?

☑ Visits, e-mail, webinars, phone calls, regional meetings, and one state meeting per year.

☑ I do a weekly district update every Sunday evening. It covers pieces of leadership tips, announcements, deadlines, my schedule, and recognition of staff in the district.

☑ We use multiple strategies including County Coordinator conference calls (monthly) regional newsletters (monthly), regional staff conferences (quarterly), Regional Lead Agent / Program Team Leader meetings (quarterly). Typically, regional supervisors do rotational weekly site visits to counties throughout a region and regularly participate in agent programs.

☑ Email with all agents through the listserv as well as face to face meetings with Unit Coordinators.

☑ Regular e-mail updates, and routine phone calls to individuals are very important. We also have Districts and Regions that meet via webinar bi-monthly or quarterly to provide updates and hear from agents across the area that is supervised.

☑ Email, video conferences and other technology.

☑ LYNC WebEx.

☑ We use ZOOM a lot for video conferencing and meetings. We still conduct county director meetings every other month in person. Obviously email groups are useful. We are currently working in TN to move to a new online learning system. This will be important in engagement as well.

5 Please share any BMPs on strengthening new or existing stakeholder relationships.

☑ Two of the best are impact reporting and the use of advisory councils.

☑ Division administration created "Friends Committees" in each county to assist with communication with legislators and funding bodies.

☑ Meet with the County Manager(s) at least annually and attend and speak at all the special functions I can - Report to the People, Report to the Commissioners, Volunteer Appreciation. etc.

☑ Traditional public relations methods are essential to the maintenance of support for Extension programs in the community. Active engagement in community meetings, civic organizations (either as a participant or a speaker), and professional groups is helpful with respect to ensuring that people are aware of the services Extension has to offer. As it relates to the connecting with the general public, efforts should be made to take Extension work to venues and/or places (public or private) where the community convenes to do business or recreate. Farmers markets are an ideal venue to engage the general public on topics that are clearly aligned with Extension work. Libraries, schools, parks, home and garden centers or other similar locations may provide additional points of interactions. INTERACTION is key.

✅ Agents are encouraged to attend Board of Supervisor meetings to share what extension is doing in their locality. Units are encouraged to submit quarterly reports to local government. Agents are encouraged to invite elected officials to their programs.

✅ Communication is they top priority. We attend and get face time at all of our Regional County Judges and Commissioners Conferences across the state. We try to always have three or four administrators (District or State) present at each conference, and involve Agents on key dates at these conferences. At the state legislature level, we identify key leadership and have a strong push for involvement of the legislator or staff at high visibility events. We also hold a briefing session (actual educational event) at the Capitol for legislators and staff every year. The focus changes, depending on our appropriation requests.

✅ Spending time with stakeholders and sending the information and update about your programs.

✅ A monthly or quarterly Newsletter is sent electronically to agents in each county who are assigned to a member of the state legislature. Invitations to participate in events are sent to each member.

✅ Interpretive Events Regular communication with Co. Judges and Quorum Court Members Regular updates at Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's, Home Town Health Coalitions, school district health committees.

✅ Involve them regularly in program planning and needs assessment efforts. We have advisory committees etc. at the state and county levels. Each county also has an appointed Ag Committee to serve in an advisory capacity in the county.

✅ We require all faculty to have a minimum of two program advisory committee meetings annually.

✅ Kentucky - It is a legislative expectation that each county has an organized County Extension Council. In addition, agents are expected to organize individual program area councils.   Representatives from across the state make up a State Extension Council, which is utilized by state administration for advice and feedback on state level issues.
http://psd.ca.uky.edu/statecouncils

6 Please share any BMPs on building leadership skills in your employees.

✅ Training regularly in this area from several angles along with testimonials has been the best method. Focusing them on leading rather than just managing has been a key attitudinal approach.

✅ Conduct a leadership training at all quarterly district team meetings. A Staff Advance is held annually usually in August.

✅ Encourage employees to actively participate in leadership training tailored to the Land Grant System such as PLN, LEAD 21, JCEP, etc.   Assign project/program responsibility not only to the individuals in which you can clearly identify leadership capacity, but also those that you sense will respond to the challenge if given the opportunity. Be willing to serve as backup support.

✅ We are currently working on an Agent Leadership Development Program with the Universities Office of Professional Development that would be a cohort of agents who participate in a year-long leadership development program.

✅ We have an intense training for 25 employees, selected every 2 years called Leadership Extension. There are four week-long sessions that are designed to prepare participants for increased leadership opportunities.

✅ Have selected district committees for agents to serve on and provide leadership

✓ Spring and Fall meetings with speakers Trainings in person or online Individual meetings if needed.

✓ For a limited number of Extension Agents annually we offer a two session 3-day training that includes faculty from research, teaching and extension.

Please share any resources utilized in support of leadership development.

✓ I have used a variety of personality tests, curriculum, etc. The best results have been from highlighting successful colleagues that have demonstrated leadership success; use them as the resource people.

✓ I pay for outside presenters and purchase books for all the Administrative Team - County Extension Directors and Administrative Assistants.

✓ LEAD 21: lead-21.org Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP): jcep.org Northwest Region Supervisory Training Series: **http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/supervisorytrainingseries.aspx**

✓ We are in the beginning stages of Lead 95, a training developed for new county directors.

✓ We will be using established programs such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicators, True Colors, 360 Survey, etc.

✓ Part of the Onboarding process.

7 Describe any successful strategies utilized to enhance local support for Extension operations.

✓ Program impact statements and showing the dollar investment by the University in the local county have worked very well to help in this area of work. Each County is provided information unique to them as to dollar amounts. For example, a County appropriation may be $75,000.00 and the

University is investing $300,000.00 in personnel. This shows our commitment.

✓ We have several counties that have secured new facilities or are planning to do so. It is a direct result of the CEDs I have in those counties.

✓ Develop an annual report. Include data associated with Farm Gate Value reporting to drive home the economic impact associated with the sector with which Extension is most closely aligned. Participant numbers are great, but not always a good indicator of program impact. Value statements associated with an individual's program can help quantify the value of programs for which little direct economic benefit may be derived. See: LEARN HOW TO ANALYZE COST BENEFITS OF EXTENSION PROGRAMMING **https://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agexed/exeval/Evaluation%20Website/Learning%20Resources/Learn_How_to_Analyze_Cost_Benefits.pdf**

✓ We will soon be using a system wide on-line registration program that will allow for the acceptance of credit cards. We are also beginning to discuss areas where we could generate revenue from our programs beyond cost recovery.

✓ Regular reports to Commissioners' Court Agents serve on local committees.

✓ County Friends Committee Interpretive Events with Co. Quorum Courts and other local leaders.

✓ Focus has changed to more fee based programming. Each county has endowments and we are working hard to grow endowment funds as well.

$10,000 with its bake sale), BBQ's, hunts, golf tournaments and silent auctions.

✓ We have an Extension office in each county, a County Extension Director in each county.

Describe any creative or non-traditional funding arrangements that may be deployed in support of Extension projects.

✓ The use of Contract positions has worked well. Example - a person hired for $5000.00 from a foundation to conduct 4-H activities for a summer period.

✓ We have funding agreements with city entities and also one County 4-H Foundation to support county staff.

✓ Have some programs funded through our State Agriculture Foundation.

✓ Pursue funding where it seems to be available. Depending on specific geographic proximity, funding models may be shifting away from state and even county level support in favor of alternative creative arrangements that exist with municipal governments, school districts, NGO's. Traditional formula funding must be flexible. Agents are encouraged to cover the cost of programming/projects using grants, partnerships, sponsors and revenue.

✓ The summer intern program is funded 50/50 between Virginia Cooperative Extension and local dollars.

✓ Endowments, Grants, Fundraisers, dances, bake sales (one county brings in over

8 Please share any BMPs in regards to marketing Extension to non-traditional users?

✓ Video use as well as social media has worked well with this clientele. If we can get them, regular e-mails are successful.

✓ Social media is used extensively.

✓ Use a great deal of social media to reach out too many audiences.

✓ Marketing strategies should mimic shifts that occur in the private sector away from traditional methods and towards web based / social media. Such strategies will never completely supplant traditional methods, rather they should target audiences that are being missed by current target marketing i.e. youth and minority audiences. Creative ways to identify teachable /visible demonstrations of lessons that Extension programs teach throughout the community (urban and rural) are a good idea for staying in front of the "customer" or stakeholder.

✓ Newspapers, Social Media, emails, flyers, radio, Television.

✓ Cross marketing is a real potential. We should market all program areas when conducting programs. Obviously social media is important for non-users. Many cities and communities have social media "Hip" pages that you can join and advertise programs to non-users.

9 Please share any ways in which technology has assisted you in your role as a Middle Manager.

✓ Essential!!! Webinar training, e-mails, and easy cell phone access have been essential.

✓ We regularly use the Zoom app to hold quarterly Staff Chair Conferences.

- ✅ I utilize computers - desk top, laptop, IPAD, and two smart phones, to be accessible most of the time.

- ✅ Web based technology makes it easier to be anywhere at once. Tasks such as signing off on financial documents that previously may have required, time, travel and/or postage can now be performed at the drop of a hat using mobile technology. Meetings that would have only been possible in person, cannot be conducted virtually. Research that would have taken hours previously now can be conducted in minutes.

- ✅ We are utilizing Microsoft OneDrive shared folders for agents to provide supporting documentation for their program accomplishments.   Agents are able to share not only newsletters, but also radio programs, photos, videos etc.   We are looking at streamlining the folders to match the MJR's listed on the performance evaluation.

- ✅ Polycom and WebEx have provided the opportunity to meet virtually for both agent meetings as well as Unit Coordinator Meetings while alleviating constraints posed by the budget.

- ✅ Quarterly Regional Updates meetings held via webinar. This seems to be a very efficient use of time and resources.

- ✅ Communication - cell, email, Zoom - online line meeting software. Most important still face to face - low tech.

- ✅ I have moved to using tablet for communication when traveling. SharePoint has been great too. I think it's important to have info in a system that is easy to share with colleagues. Online video meetings have been great too.

- ✅ Using the Zoom app for short meetings, trainings, and conferencing has increased efficiency.

- ✅ We use interactive video for administrative use, program planning, agent meetings, and program delivery, using Skype for Business (free to all faculty and staff) All Faculty can use "SharePoint" and "OneDrive" for document sharing, Office 365 Cloud Services University "Drop Box" 20GB availability for all faculty   County Faculty in

one Extension District by program area has implemented district-wide information delivery via, integrated social media platforms using "WordPress, Facebook, and Twitter" using a custom developed subscription system, http://subscribe.ifas.ufl.edu/

- ✅ Video conferencing has made it possible for have face to face meeting with agents without the usual travel time.

Please share any uses of technology that are being used in your organization to assist personnel.

- ✅ I-books, kiosks, webinars, video reporting, YouTube, etc. have all been employed.

- ✅ Zoom training meetings for agents are used in lieu of face to face meetings to increase efficiencies related to time and travel.

- ✅ We use Blackboard Collaborate, Google Hangout and Zoom to reach personnel.

- ✅ All agents receive a mobile phone stipend, laptop and other equipment required to perform their jobs. There is little, if any learning curve associated with the use of this equipment, with the notable exception of applications that may be required for specialized purposes.

- ✅ On-line training modules are currently being used for both agents and staff. The First Fridays training program outlined above utilizes WebEx as the delivery mode.

- ✅ Online trainings keep personnel informed of update in information, of trainings

available, of conferences that may enhance programs.

✓ We have a District IT specialist in each extension district that assists in hardware, software and connectivity issues- definite need for application support.

Please share any other Best Management Practices that might help your fellow Middle Managers.

✓ I introduced Strengths Finder to the Administrative Team about five years ago. It has been used in all county offices to have staff understand how to work together. I do a training on this with New and Aspiring CEDs and they find it helpful.

✓ Agents are overworked. Provide positive thoughts, encouragement, and sometimes make funny awards to liven up the meetings. If allowed, give administrative leave for jobs well done. We are allowed to give up to 4 days a year. Find ways to let them know what they do is appreciated. I've learned they don't want to read Blogs that are lengthy. Short bits of information: Who, When, Where, What, Why, and How. That's all you need with pictures. Everyone likes pictures.

Resources

Astroth, K.A., Goodwin,J. & Hodnett, F. (2011). Servant leadership: guiding Extension programs in the 21st Century. Journal of Extension [On-line] 49(3). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2011june/a1.php

Campbell, D., Grieshp, J., Sokolow, A., & Wright, J. (2004). Supporting the critical administrative leadership role of county directors. Journal of Extension [On-line], 42(2), Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2004april/a3.php

Diem, K.G. (2011). Are you ready to be an administrator? A self-assessment to help manage expectations when assuming a new role. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 49(4).

Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2011august/tt1.php

Dinnocenzo, D.A. (2006). *How to lead from a distance*. Walk the Talk Books. Dallas, Texas.

Fisher, K & Fisher, M. (2000) *The distance manager: a hands on guide to managing off-site employees and virtual teams. McGraw-Hill*. New York, New York.

Gibson, J.D. & Brown, A.S. (2002). Maximizing agents' effectiveness: Virginia Cooperative Extension's answer to training new extension agents. Journal of Extension [On-line], 40(1). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2002february/tt4.php

Godwin, D., Diem, K. G., & Maddy, D. J. (2011). Best management practices for a successful transition into an administrative role. *Journal of Extension*, [On-line], 49(4). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2011august/a1.php

Kutilek, L.M., Conklin, N.L., Gunderson, G. (2002). Investing in the future: addressing work/life issues of employees. Journal of Extension [On-line], 40(1). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2002february/a6.php

Lepsinger, R. & DeRosa, D. (2010). Virtual team success: a practical guide for working and leading from a distance. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

Patterson, T. F. (1997). Fundamentally flawed: Extension administrative practice part 1. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 35(6). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/1997december/comm1.php

Smith, K.L. & Torppa, C.B. (2010). Creating the capacity for organizational change: personal participation and receptivity to change. Journal of Extension [On-line], 48(4). Available at:
http://www.joe.org/joe/2010august/a1.php