

# Marketing

## Test transition during harvest season



### Family Business

By LANCE WOODBURY

**I**N a family business transition from the older generation to the younger generation, one of the common stumbling blocks is the older generation's concern that the younger generation hasn't had enough decision-making experience. Most of this tension is

#### Key Points

- Harvest is a good time to test a young person's management ability.
- Let the next generation "grow" by making important harvest decisions.
- If the younger person does well, you know the farm is probably in good hands.

evident during the five to 10 years following the younger generation's return, although sometimes it even occurs when the "kids" have been back on the farm for decades.

The fall harvest season can offer a good opportunity to test the operational and management decision-making capacity of the younger generation in a relatively controlled environment and under some pressure. Harvest involves the allocation of significant farm resources — equipment and labor — to accomplish a major economic activity, and both generations are often right in the middle of the frenzy.

Allowing the younger generation to direct equipment use, maintenance and repairs offers the older generation a

chance to see how the younger person utilizes one of the most important and intensive aspects of farming. Is he or she using equipment to its fullest potential? Does the person take care of the asset? Are necessary repairs made promptly?

At a higher level, harvest can give a glimpse into one's equipment philosophy. Does the younger person's approach to equipment make you comfortable? Can he or she balance new equipment needs with the financial ability of the farm? Are costs and benefits of new vs. older equipment understood? Does the younger generation know the difference between being on the "leading edge" and being on the "bleeding edge" when it comes to investing in new technology?

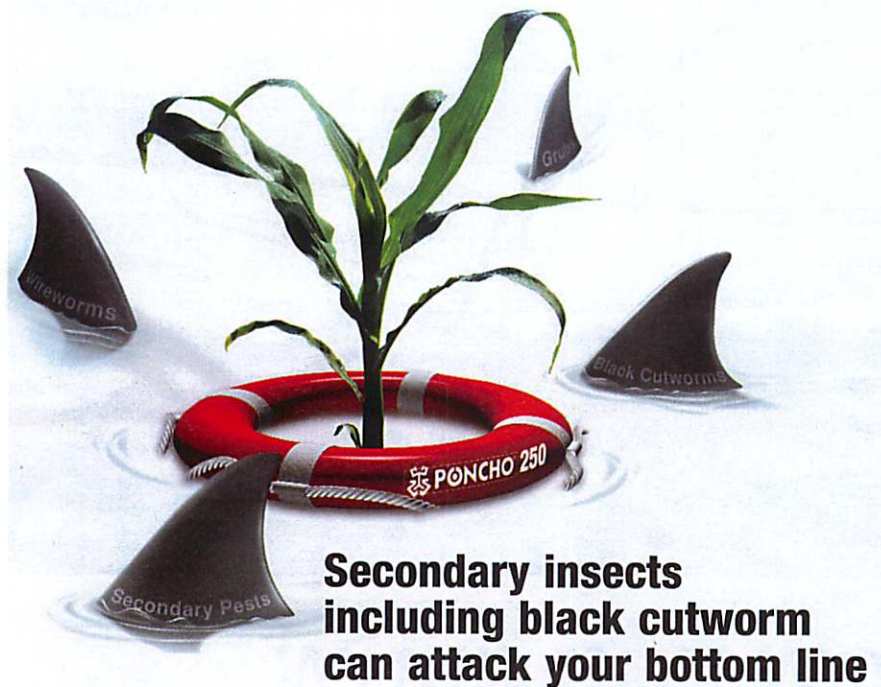
Managing harvest help offers another chance to see how the younger generation makes decisions. Encourage leadership in decisions about how help is used. Who will accomplish different harvest tasks and routine farm needs? When a breakdown occurs or inclement weather slows harvest activity, how is extra help utilized? Who communicates "the plan" for the day? How does the younger generation handle some of the people problems that occur during harvest?

#### Intense times breed leadership

A third opportunity to observe the younger generation's management potential is to encourage them to interact with vendors or farm stakeholders. Equipment dealers during parts runs, custom-harvest operators and employees at the elevator or feedyard are all people that may interact with your business during the course of a typical harvest day. Furthermore, communicating harvest progress to the banker and updating the landowner are some of the more critical, long-term interactions that are often handled by the older generation.

Offer the next generation a chance to take the lead on some of this interaction. Chances are slim that they will make a decision or have an interaction that will wreck the farm. Chances are high, however, that the older generation will increase their comfort level with how the younger generation handles management activities and decisions in a short, intense period of time.

Woodbury works at the Garden City office of Kennedy and Coe LLC.



### Secondary insects including black cutworm can attack your bottom line

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