

Bridging the Generational Gap with a “Granular” Platform

By Lance Woodbury and Lauren Riensche

Today, more than 62% of principal family farm operators in the United States are over the age of 55. And while the running joke is that farmers never retire, it's no joke that the transition process between generations can be difficult.

Fortunately, we're in a brave new world—one where you can send a message across the globe in a single second, where robots take selfies on Mars, and where technology can smooth the management and transition of farming operations.

Managerial tools are coming to market with a mission in mind—assist farmers in the organization of their information and operations. These tools also have the potential to significantly help family farms in the midst of a generational transition.

A company called Granular is currently developing industry-leading software that offers several key benefits for large farms and operations in the middle of a generational handoff. For example, if the younger generation is focused on operations, but the senior generation is focused on broader business issues, Granular can be part of a process to facilitate full visibility and understanding of both operational and strategic issues.

Farm management software can help the incoming generation gain a better view of the day-to-day business decisions the current owner makes, allowing for quicker and deeper learning and fewer mistakes. When knowledge sharing doesn't happen, new operators can make assumptions—and worse, decisions—based on unverified and undocumented information. Granular offers a foundation for the knowledge-sharing process.

Granular allows for another important benefit: mobility. Because the Granular software is securely based in the cloud, generations can be miles apart physically and still have access to the same information. Farm partners can review the business activities and decisions, providing real-time monitoring and reassurance that things are going according to plan.

And mobility isn't only useful in the family transition process; landowner relationships can also benefit from Granular's data collection and storage. If a landowner is curious about what was planted in their field, when chemical or fertilizer applications were made, or when a tiling project was completed (or any other information recorded in the software), the answer could be instantly available to the extent the grower has inputted and shared the data.

Granular also can serve as a vehicle to professionalize a farming business during a transition period—a smart and strategic goal, especially for farms with multiple generations transitioning into management positions as farms are in an expansion mode. It sports an interface that farmers of all ages will find easy to learn and use. It includes features that will numb the headache of the multiple-entry system from which so many farmers have suffered. Granular works to integrate a great variety of record-keeping methods, like accounting programs, brokerage statements, elevator tickets, and computer spreadsheets. The software brings all the information farmers keep stored across their many platforms together in one place, where it can be easily read, processed, stored, and used in real-time.

Granular's farm management software helps to promote knowledge transfer across generations. Farm partners can more quickly and easily learn from each other, managers can better communicate with their employees, and less time can be spent on information recording, reporting and storage, which means growers have more time to focus on the decisions necessary to achieve success in the next phase of growth.

It's obvious that this company understands the challenges a business-oriented farmer faces today, and that they're working hard live up to their motto: "The world's most efficient farms run on Granular."

About the Authors

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