

Northern Partners uses new tools to tell co-op story, build pride

As farmers and community leaders gathered for a tour of a new joint-venture fertilizer terminal in Peru, Ill., they were treated to an interesting video showing the terminal's construction process — starting with a powerful message about the value of the co-op. “I used the new television commercial available from CHS to lead into our video because the message of working together is a good one for us to share. We're definitely stronger together,” says Kevin Nelson, director of communications, Northern Partners Cooperative, Mendota, Ill.

Reaction from open house attendees was positive, helping to set a good tone for the event, says Nelson. “It's a strong ad for the cooperative system and the co-op way of doing things, but it doesn't feel too 'commercial' because the focus is on how the local co-op works with farmers.” [View Northern Partners video here.](#)

The new television spot is available to cooperatives from CHS as part of the [Value of the Co-op Tool Kit](#), which also includes customizable radio scripts, newspaper ads, digital ads, social media posts and more.

“Our cooperative wants to continue growing. These tools are perfect for helping us move forward,” says Nelson, who recently used a radio script from the tool kit in his promotions for Northern Partners. “The first line of the radio script is ‘the spirit of cooperation has always been a part of farming.’ This is a story the next generation needs to hear,” he says.

“Young farmers who are taking over the decision-making are sometimes working with the cooperative because it's what their family has always done. They may not necessarily have thought about how – and why – the cooperative is different from other businesses. It's important that they really understand our unique advantages over the competition.”

Nelson recommends that other cooperatives download and use the tools. “It's very helpful for us to have a unified voice,” he says. “We're telling the overall story of the value of the cooperative system, and we're tying it to our local cooperative's story, in a clear way.”

As an experienced agronomist, Nelson believes telling the Value of the Co-op story can help cooperatives strengthen their business.

“Today's farmers need trusted advisors in order to deal with all the technology, science and precision details. The fact that the co-op is your *local* source of that information, that's a huge resonance point with farmers and especially the younger generation. In addition, the message that the profits stay local has always been important to rural communities, and these tools help us get that message out.”

Nelson thinks the materials can help with employee retention, recruitment and training, too. “New employees need to know that we think of farmers as more than our customers — because they’re our owners. And it’s good to remind even our long-term employees about why we should be proud to be a part of the cooperative system.”

Link to video at: https://youtu.be/51Yg4VwC_X0

Link to toolkit at: <http://www.chsinc.com/our-company/value-of-the-coop>