



FCC Knowledge Podcast – Episode: Getting Social: Advocating, Recruiting and Going Digital – Bowditch Family

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Marty Seymour (MS)

Guests: Carlie Bowditch (CB) and Joline Bowditch (JB)

MS: From AgExpert, it's the FCC Knowledge Podcast, a show that features real Canadian producers, real stories, and real good conversations about the business of farming. I'm your host, Marty Seymour.

CB: People who are looking for jobs now want to see what kind of equipment they'll be driving, what shop they'll be working in, what they're going to eat for supper. And our social media pages have given us a lens to show that opportunity to our potential employees.

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MS: Hello everyone, and welcome to another episode of the FCC podcast. On today's show, we're going to speak with Carlie Bowditch from Bowditch Farms. Now Carlie, full disclosure, is a colleague of mine at FCC in her day-to-day life, but she's really on our show to talk about her involvement in her family farm. Carlie is part of a third-generation family farm that specializes in grains and oilseeds in Sylvania, Saskatchewan. And what I love about Carlie's story is she's really active on social media, but does some really good, innovative things around digitizing her farm records. She's forward thinking and progressive, and I hope you're inspired by some of what they're doing on their farm, and maybe you can apply it in your own operation. We also get a cameo from Carlie's mom Joline who's going to pop in and share some of her thoughts on the farm and her perspectives as well. We have lots of great info to come. Stick around.

Today on the show we have with us Carlie Bowditch. Welcome to the show, Carlie.

CB: Thanks for having me.

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MS: Now Carlie, you're from Saskatchewan. Help us put your small, little town on the map.

CB: So, we're located in Northeast Saskatchewan. We're about 10 minutes south of Tisdale, and just a little bit west of the hamlet of Sylvania.

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MS: So, Sylvania. Hamlet's a pretty small word. How many people in Sylvania?

CB: I don't think there would be 50 of us, 40-ish.

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MS: So, if there's a wedding, it's going to be a pretty close community then, so that's fun.

CB: You bet, yes.

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MS: Okay, everybody knows. What's the price of land in Northeast Saskatchewan, up near Tisdale?

CB: I actually used our FCC land values tool this morning to take a look at what it's trading at in our area, and we're right at that \$3,000 an acre.

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MS: So, that's canola country. Now, you said, I used the FCC land values thing, because you work at FCC?

CB: I do, yes. I'm currently a relationship manager at the Tisdale office.

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MS: That's not why you're on the show today, though. You're on the show today because you're actively involved in the family farm. So, why don't you tell us about the farm?

CB: We have a third-generation small grains and oilseed operation. And my dad is the main decision maker, alongside with my mom who has a huge role as well. And then my sister and I both went to university, got an education in agriculture. I was marketing and business, and she is marketing and economics. We both run some equipment, help with some record keeping, and odds and ends on the farm. And we'll see how our roles advance moving forward.

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MS: We've got listeners coast to coast. It wasn't that long ago we talked to an apple grower in the East Coast, and we've got grain farmers in Southern Ontario. I always think the scope and the size of a farm is super interesting. So, how many acres would you plan to seed this spring, Carlie?

CB: We farm 8,000 acres.

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MS: Within your community up there, is that the average size farm?

CB: I would say we're on the larger side of average. We're by no means the biggest guys around, but there's lots of 2,000-acre farms where they have some off farm [income] to supplement that. So, for purely farm families, I would think we're about average.

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MS: Carlie and her family have a sizable amount of land to manage. She'd be the first to admit that it's not the biggest farm in her area, but between her full-time work at FCC and being involved in an 8,000-acre grain farm, she's got a lot going on. I have no idea how she makes space for the PR work she does for the farm on social media, so let's hear about that.

Now, this is where our story gets even better is you're a long ways from average. You guys do some social media for the farm. Tell us about that.

CB: You can follow us on Facebook, Bowditch Farms Limited, or on Instagram—bowditch_farms. What you'll see is basically just our day-to-day operations. I try to post about once a month. You'll see our hired men, and us and our family, and what we do on the farm daily, and why we do it.

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MS: As promised, we're going to hear from Carlie's mom, Joline Bowditch. I thought it was the perfect time to ask Joline her thoughts about Carlie's social media efforts.

JB: I think that Carlie has a passion for agriculture awareness and agriculture advocacy, and she definitely got that from her dad. And he loves to buy cool toys. So, between the two of them, this has kind of been a fun project. And it's always good to be visible, so it was a good way to get it out there.

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MS: I see there's a bit of a movement to more and more farms participating in social media. But what's behind your driver on this? I've met people that said, "Well, it makes us a

good community citizen, so maybe when we're buying land or we're spreading manure, that we've got a little bit of street credit out there." Why do you do it?

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CB: I think there are three reasons that we do it. 1) Is that my dad and I both have a passion for agriculture advocacy. We just want to show the true and the bright side of agriculture, and show the faces behind it, and let the people, the consumer, know that it's real people, with real want and need for sustainability, and passion for their job, that are out here growing their crops. 2) We've seen a really cool connection with some family members, people who grew up on the farm and/or visited our farm in the summers as children. And now they have busy lives and can't come back as much, and they've reached out and said that, "Hey, this is great, these videos, these pictures, gives us that true connection back to our roots." And then, 3) we've actually seen a little bit of improvement in our ability to hire some seasonal help. My dad and I went to a conference put on by FCC called Weathering the Storm, and one of the HR comments was that the days of putting an ad out there, saying "Call Ryan at this number to be a truck driver", are gone. People who are looking for jobs now want to see what kind of equipment they'll be driving, what shop they'll be working in, what they're going to eat for supper. And our social media pages have given us a lens to show that opportunity to our potential employees.

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MS: So, when you're posting, is there a deliberateness around your choice of what gets shared and when?

CB: Yeah, a bit. We try to keep it timely. Just the other day we were loading trucks, and dad sent me a couple pictures and said, "Hey, here's what we're up to today, want to post about it?" So, basically, it's a bit of a team effort. We do have a drone, so I get to fly that and take some pretty cool pictures. But mostly, we're just showing you what we're up to during that season and giving a little bit of insight as to who does what on our place, and letting you know what things look like as a farmer. We try to show both the good and the bad. I did a post two harvests ago about some teamwork and how that can be frustrating, to put that in good words, I guess. We do have new seasonal help. We have some guys that come regularly, we see every year, but we also have one or two new guys every year. And sometimes the communication isn't the best, or the training doesn't go as planned, and there can be some frustration during our busy seasons. And I try to open the door to that we're not perfect, and every operation, every business has its ups and downs, and try to show both sides of that. I will say that it's a little more positive than negative, just trying to show off what we're proud of, but generally speaking, trying to keep it realistic as well.

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MS: I love that. And that's the advocacy side of what you're doing, around just being transparent about our industry and this whole public trust in ag more than ever, and this whole movement to tell our story. It sounds like you've found your lane on that one too. So, how do you manage the risk around the haters out there? Does anybody ever pile on your account and say, "We don't like what you're doing, we don't like what you stand for?"

CB: We've been extremely lucky. The majority of our followers at this point in time are family and friends, maybe acquaintances, or friends of family. So, most of them have some connection to a farm or grew up in an agricultural community, or they know us as people and know that we make sound decisions, so I haven't had to deal with any trolls as of yet. But I know that that's a possibility, and I think that we just need to recognize that if we reach one person and give them a reason to trust the food system and trust Saskatchewan farmers, that that's worth the odd negative comment here and there, and we just won't take that one to heart.

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MS: It sounds like Carlie and her farm are really benefiting from using social media to increase the visibility and connect to the public as a whole. Now, Carlie's got a strong focus on agriculture advocacy, and is clearly very passionate about the subject. But I don't want to gloss over her third reason for using social media to promote the farm. She uses it to benefit the human resource side of the business. I'm curious to hear what particular social media platform had the most positive impact on her labour recruitment efforts.

CB: We have used Facebook. There's actually a Facebook Recruiter now, so if you create a job, it will post it, just like Marketplace works on Facebook. And we have actually had a few applications come through that way, and one successful candidate come through that way. So, just another avenue to connect with people and get in front of the workforce that is available in our area. So, yeah, I would say Facebook is directly helping with us recruiting.

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MS: Do you think age has a factor on which channel people are chasing, in your experience?

CB: Yes, I would say so. I think our Facebook is a little bit more the older generation. I would say my parents and their parents, those guys are all on Facebook. And then our Instagram audience is more that high school, 20-year-olds seem to go towards Instagram. And we even have made some connections with some agriculture influencers that follow us back, comment on some of our stuff, which is pretty neat.

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MS: I'm reflecting on a conversation I had. We were doing the CTV morning show six, seven years ago, and I said, "What's the biggest change in the news?" And they said, "A lot of our content is being consumed on Facebook now". And I said, "Really, who's doing that?" And it was the 50-plus crowd was now getting most of their news through that channel, which used to be seen as this young, progressive, millennial social play, actually has become an anchor news feed for many people having coffee in the morning, getting ready to go out to work.

CB: Yeah, my great-grandma is on Facebook. She's 94, so she gets to get that connection to the farm. She sees the pictures of our baby horses, and of us running combines. And she'll even send us a message on Facebook, just reaching out to say how proud she is, or how nice it was to see that picture and feel connected again. So, that's pretty special.

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MS: Clearly, Carlie is having some success using social media as a recruitment tool. She's way more tech savvy than I could ever be, and she's really enthusiastic about incorporating technology into their operation. Where her story gets a lot more exciting is that she is also using one of my most favourite digitization tools. Now, I might be a little bit biased based on where I work, but it's a pretty good tool.

Okay, now you're doing something else pretty neat on the farm and that is, I would say you've really embraced digitizing your farm records. Tell me about that.

CB: There's been the push the last couple of years here to digitize, and our farm has been looking for an easier, more organized way to keep records. And we've used AgExpert Accounting for many years, and we're now trying out the AgExpert Field as well. So, at this point in time, we have an Excel sheet in every piece of equipment. And our operators are responsible for writing the date, what they're up to, what they're applying, how much, on each activity. And then that gets brought to me and I enter it into that AgExpert Field program in order to keep accurate records for our agronomy.

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MS: You got me here. If I understand AgExpert, and I use it on our own farm myself, so I bring a bias to this conversation too. But this idea I can use it on my device, or I can come in the house and use it on my computer, but I heard you say you're keeping paper records in the tractor. So, the hired help puts the paper information in and brings it to you for data entry?

CB: Yeah. At this point in time, we do have mostly retired farmers as our hired help, and we are very, very thankful for them. But they're really not interested in logging in and entering that. So, my hope at one point in time will be that everyone who operates a piece of our equipment will have AgExpert on their phone, they'll log in through their login, and before they start anything, they'll enter the information. But at this point in time, they enter that on a sheet of paper and then I do all the data entry. When we're

done spraying, I enter the spraying. When we're done harvest, I enter the harvest. That type of organization.

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MS: Carlie is currently in somewhat of a transition phase with digitizing their records. She's using AgExpert Field to keep track of their field records, but there's still paper entry that occurs to accommodate the employees. Now, I know I've brought this up before on the podcast, but digitization is still a work in progress in agriculture. The last market research we did at FCC would estimate about 50% of farm records are still yet to be digitized. So, clearly, not everyone is into this digital record keeping. I wondered what made Joline and Carlie really want to digitize.

JB: Oh, I love the accessibility. I travel quite a lot, and I'm often needing to do things not necessarily from home. And I can access this from my laptop, or my desktop, or my iPad, so it's nice that way. I can be down in New Mexico visiting my daughter and still do payroll and keep up to date with all that kind of stuff. So, that is my favourite part of it.

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CB: I think some of it is ease of access, like you were mentioning. I can work on this from anywhere, so I can open my laptop here, at home, and enter this. Or if I'm away for the weekend, I can work on it there. Another big positive we've seen from this program is we use it to do our seeded acres report for crop insurance. So, you can draw your maps of all your fields, or import them from a GPS. And when you go to do your seeded acres report every year, your AgExpert Field will automatically create that report, tell you how many acres are on each quarter section with what type of crop. My dad has mentioned that that was probably a two-day process previous to using AgExpert, and now, as long as you enter everything correctly the first time, it's about an hour process now, so that's a pretty big efficiency change.

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MS: And I used the seeded acres report too. I think it speaks to exactly what software needs to do, and that's solving a real problem for me. So, it's one thing to collect the data, get it in the system, but if you help my crop insurance reporting and make it easier, man, I think the adoption rates go way up.

CB: Yeah. And I'm excited for the inventory part as well. It's something we're not utilizing fully as of yet, but the Field and the Accounting side do talk to each other. So, I'm looking this year to track inventory from the weigh scale in the grain cart to each bin, and where it goes, and that should talk to the Accounting side and keep our inventory up to date as well.

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MS: You've only been doing this for a few years, 2017, 2018, you start keeping good records. Long term, what do you hope to gather by having all that information gathered in one spot and digitized?

CB: I think this tool can be as helpful as you make it. So, my hope for the next couple years is to put our costs in, and actually be able to make agronomy decisions based on cost per acre and revenue per acre, shown by the data that we're keeping. So, not only is it, a) we're no longer using the blue book, where we used to keep all of our information, and if the blue book went missing, we were just out of luck. We now have a Cloud version that everyone can access. But b) we may actually be able to make some changes or some updates to how we farm, based on the numbers that we see in this program.

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MS: After the break, Carlie and Joline share more about how they use AgExpert Accounting to help with that side of their business. And we're going to hear them elaborate more on how they manage the human resource side of the business. You don't want to miss it.

CB: I always say that even if you learn one thing from an event, or from a conference, or from a person that you meet, if you learn one thing, that was worth your time.

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MS: It's by no accident, the FCC Knowledge Podcast is brought to you by AgExpert, farm management software designed for Canadian agriculture. To find out more about the differences between AgExpert Accounting and AgExpert Field, visit AgExpert.ca. All your questions will be answered.

So far, we've learned that the Bowditch family are farming about 8,000 acres, they're heavily involved in social media, and they use it to promote everything that they do. They're also really passionate about agriculture advocacy, and they use their platform to communicate positive farming messages within their larger community. To add to this, the Bowditch family are also using AgExpert Field to digitize their farm records and help them make better decisions. Now, there's one piece that we haven't talked about much yet, and that's their accounting department. Joline has no formal training, but she uses AgExpert Accounting to help her manage that side of the business. We're going to let Carlie tell you more about it.

CB: I applaud my mom. She has no education in accounting, but when my parents took over the farm from my great-uncle in 2017, my mom jumped into the books headfirst. So, what she's loved about Ag Accounting is that it's agriculture focused, so there's no parts of agriculture where it doesn't work in that program. It already understands agriculture, so that part is a huge bonus. And then the support behind AgExpert, whether we're talking Account or Field, the AgExpert Support Line is open lots of hours most days. And they always have an answer, and if they don't, they'll get you one. So, that's been

instrumental in her taking over the books because she always has someone to refer to if she needs the assistance. And I think just overall organization. Again, with the flexibility. My mom is a figure skating coach, my sister goes to school in New Mexico, my parents like to travel. So, payroll happens, month end happens no matter where she is, and now she can take that with her and do some updates if needed.

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JB: AgExpert Accounting is a huge asset. I find the payroll a really good program within that program. Again, our accountant is a wonderful resource, and he's always available to answer any questions I have or whatnot. But yeah, I find payroll quite an easy job because of this.

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MS: That is cool. I want to talk a little bit about HR. You've got some hired help. We talked about using social media to get people. Just walk us through how you manage the labour on your 8,000-acre farm.

CB: My mom and dad are the main operators and work more than full time. And we have one full-time hired man on salary. His name is Cody, and this will be our ninth season with him. And then we are really fortunate to have some retired people in our area that come and run a drill, or a swather, or a combine seasonally. So, those are the guys that keep returning, and we're pretty grateful to have them. And then during our busy seasons, mostly harvest, but sometimes in seeding, we're looking to hire between one and three extra people to have on hand. And I'd say that's where our struggles are the most, those seasonal positions are tougher to fill, and we find that we need to train someone new quite often. But we've had pretty good luck so far, so we're crossing our fingers that that continues.

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MS: I'm always intrigued by the published hourly rates that exist in the industry, and how they're different. And I think people listening are always fascinated by what the market rate would be for labour. So, what would be an average hourly rate in your marketplace?

CB: I think it differs extremely based on experience, but I would say for an experienced operator, between that \$20.00 and \$25.00 would be an average. Something that we do on our operation for those seasonal employees that we maybe don't know as well, or this is their first year, is we do a \$2.00 an hour, we hold back. So, if you're brand new to our operation, you're going to come run the grain cart, we'll offer you, say, \$16.00 an hour. And if you stick out all of harvest and you're there on the last day, then we'll bump that up to \$18.00 and backdate that to the day that you started. So, we just see it as a bit of an incentive for them to make sure they stick around. And we also just want them to know how important it is that we have their help through the whole thing.

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MS: Oh, I love this idea of paying a, I guess it's really a bonus. You look at it as a holdback, but I bet you as me driving a cart thinking I'm making \$16.00, get this fun little cheque when it's all over as a bonus, it's quite a motivator.

CB: Yeah. And those guys that we get year after year, we trust them, and we know they're coming back, so we wouldn't do it for them, but those new employees, it's just covering us a little bit.

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MS: The Bowditch family have some really clever ideas when it comes to managing the people side of their business and retention in general. It seems like they sort of adjust the score depending on who they're dealing with from a staffing standpoint. I imagine this helps them identify the employees who are committed and willing to stick around for the long term. But as well, we all know this, that the bulk of crop-related work takes place in the warmer months. So, Carlie mentioned earlier that she has an employee named Cody that's been working on that farm for nine years. I was wondering what they have him involved with in the winter, what keeps Cody busy, and how do they retain their staff in their slower times of the year.

CB: Well, normally we hope that we have a lot of grain to move. In our area it's very common to dry grain, so sometimes we're drying grain all the way to January, so that keeps everyone pretty busy. And then we're hauling grain after that. And then our farm does almost all of the maintenance on our own equipment, so they'll pull almost every piece of equipment into the shop over winter and give it a once-over, and that seems to keep them pretty busy until it's go time again.

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MS: On your full-time model then, do you offer benefits and those other more comprehensive packages for somebody that you keep on staff all year long?

CB: Yeah. Cody does have a benefits package. He's been with us for nine years, but my parents bought half of the farm from my dad's uncle in 2017, so that's when my dad started making more management decisions. So, in 2017 would have been when Cody started on salary and was offered a benefits package as well. And then this year, just because we're hoping to keep him long term and we want to look out for his best needs, they also started a pension plan for him. So, this will be out first year with that in place.

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MS: Oh, that's fascinating. Pension for farm employees, I'd give you a shout out for being really progressive in your thinking. How's the pension structured? In my world, most corporate companies do a matching plan, 2%, 3%, 5%. What's a farm pension plan like?

CB: I know that we're matching it, but honestly, that was all my mom and dad. They super appreciate Cody and they wanted to make sure that he had the opportunities he would have if he was anywhere else. So yeah, they put that one in place for him.

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MS: The Bowditch family is pretty invested in AgExpert Accounting and AgExpert Field to help them manage their farm. They're also really engaged in creating social media to promote the farm, so it's pretty obvious that they recognize the value of computer software and how it can help their business. I think it's kind of unfair to sit here as an employee of FCC and not ask them what other software do they rely on to help them make good decisions.

CB: The other software program that we find really helps our farm is we have a BIN-SENSE software. We have sensors in each one of our bins, and we can log on and check on everything. As well as if there's any emergencies or extreme changes, it will actually text my dad's phone. So, when you're dealing with commodities like canola, a heated bin can be a detriment to your operation, so that one's been a bit of a peace of mind thing, as well as a really smart move for our farm.

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MS: I don't know if you were at the table when everybody was making the decision to double down on BIN-SENSE, for example. But how did you build the business case for that investment?

CB: It was a large investment, I know that, and I know there was some weighing some pros and cons based on that. But what my dad does really well is lean on some advisors for support when making big decisions. So, he would have sat down with his financial advisor, looked at what it was going to cost, run some scenarios, and decided that it was the best move for our operation.

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MS: If you've listened to our podcast before, you've likely heard us say, reach out to experts when making big decisions about the impact on your farm and the future. Joline lives out this advice.

JB: The first advisor we started using was a financial advisor, which was key to us being able to buy into this farm. Ryan was also a part of a peer group, and he uses a marketing advising program called AgChieve. And we also sought out an accountant that is very knowledgeable in agriculture. And I think that team is a huge contributor in any success that we've seen.

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MS: So, Joline uses key advisors to help run her operation, but also, she mentions that Ryan, her husband, is also part of a peer group. It seems like potential advisors can be easy enough found through googling and looking on the internet. But sometimes finding the right group of peers can also build community and maybe in some cases it's less obvious. So, I thought I'd ask Carlie where she looks for additional support.

You, just coming home from university, probably have your peer group there. But if you look at yourself coming into the farm, stretching your legs, where do you think you could use more support?

CB: I'm someone who likes the connection, so I'm definitely involved. I'm part of the Saskatchewan Young Ag Entrepreneurs. I actually sit on the board with them. And I really appreciate the connections made there. There's lots good about the organization, but I think just putting yourself somewhere where you can relate to the other people that you're in the same part of life, that you have the same values and the same goals, and just being there to validate each other's struggles and each other's questions and be with similar-minded people. It's really refreshing to be able to connect with that type of person and know you're not alone.

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MS: I've watched different farm groups all across the country who have these types of programs. Of course, you have the formal one like the Sask Young Leaders, you've got the same thing in Ontario, there's the Cattlemen Young Leaders program. Everybody's doing something like that. What advice do you have for me, if I'm listening to this podcast and I'm actually interested in exploring one of these peer group or bigger groups? I don't even know where to start or what to do.

CB: I think just reach out. You really don't need to know all the answers. The reason for joining those groups is because you don't know all the answers, and neither do they. So, I think if you're curious or you're looking for that connection or that support, it's there. It's a Google search away, it's an application away, and why not take the advice when you can? I always say that even if you learn one thing from an event, or from a conference, or from a person that you meet, if you learn one thing, that was worth your time.

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MS: Oh yeah, great advice.

You've got to love Carlie's enthusiasm and her approach to learning from the people around her. Sometimes trying something new requires a bit of a leap, and you might be surprised where it takes you. So, with our conversation coming to a close, I thought I'd ask Joline and Carlie if they had any parting wisdom. I'll let Joline go first.

JB: I think basically just knowing our strengths and our weaknesses and everybody being able to hopefully find a role that works for them, and helping each other out where they can is what's important.

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MS: Some great succinct advice from Joline. Now it's Carlie's turn.

CB: I think we've heard it time and time again but it's worth saying one more time, is that communication is really key. I think even if you don't know for sure what your intentions are or what your future looks like, making sure you're having those conversations openly with your parents, or with your siblings, is just so important. You don't have to have all the answers or know what that looks like for you. But if you can be open and honest with each other and keep having those conversations as your plans change, it just keeps the connection true, and it keeps everyone on the same page. And you can avoid those awkward or hard conversations because you've been connecting throughout the whole process.

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MS: That is a theme that resonates through all of our podcasts. We're on season two, and I'd say we have three seasons worth of that type of feedback is communicate, communicate, communicate. What about when it gets hard and Dad does something you're not pleased with, or Mom is just annoying you this morning while you're out greasing the combine? What's your technique to make sure that Mom and Dad and you are staying on the same page?

CB: That's a good one. I'm an action-type person, so normally I have to stop myself from just jumping to action. So, I've definitely worked on the whole, take a breath, make sure that that's a true feeling that's coming for a purpose, and isn't just a reaction. And then I always also run on FCC's culture a bit where if it's bothering you 24 hours later, then it's worth saying something.

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MS: I love that communication piece because a lot of times we on this show reinforce communicating. But that's easy to say when stuff's going good. When you're trying to take the bearing off the side of the combine and the wrench slips and you bang your knuckles, sometimes it's hard to stay composed, and things might be said that don't land very flattering with your partners. So, any tips you've got.

CB: There's a time and place too. Around our house, seeding and harvest is busy and it's a little more stressful. And I think we grant my dad some grace and each other some grace, and just know that they have a lot on their plate right now. And maybe they need to be given a little bit more space, or maybe they need to be shown a little bit more appreciation in those times, just because of what life looks like for them day to day.

Sometimes you're not getting very much sleep during harvest. So, just knowing that about each other and when are our more stressful and busy times, I think helps us too.

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MS: So, do farmers need holidays?

CB: Oh, yes. I know some farmers don't like holidays. And we don't have cattle, so we don't have to stay home to feed them all the time. We do have horses, so we have to find someone to feed them while we're gone. But I think it's important to remember to enjoy life and not just life on the farm.

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MS: I'm going to leave that as our parting word. That's such a wise statement, so thanks Carlie.

CB: No problem.

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MS: Well, that's it for our conversation with the Bowditch family. It seems like the Bowditch family are really forward thinking in how they manage their farm, and they're pretty creative in how they solve some of their human resource challenges. Great stuff all around. So, what are some of the things that we can take away from today's conversation? Firstly, social media can be a really valuable business tool in our industry. I know there's probably some of you out there that resisted jumping on the social media bandwagon, or even stay out of it just because you don't like the noise. But one of the big downfalls of doing that is you lose your ability to engage the general public. Gone are the days where TV, radio, and print are good enough to get our message out. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, that's where the people are. And as our guests suggest, different platforms seem to host different demographics. Facebook isn't really seen as a young person's social media platform anymore. A recent study by [Statista](#) Research Department of January of 2022 found that the majority of Facebook users in Canada are from 25 to 34 years old. And the second-highest group is from 35 to 44 years old. I don't think these are the same people posting videos of themselves dancing on TikTok. Regular Facebook users are mostly older adults with families and careers. Now, Carlie is very passionate about using social media for agriculture advocacy and communicating her farm story. She uses social media to connect with consumers and to show them the daily truth about agriculture and our industry. The only way to effectively do this is to go where the people are. It sounds like the Bowditch family has a lot of success using social media and to deliver their message to the public. My second big takeaway is that social media coupled with creative employee recruitment and retention strategies can really help solve some of our human resource challenges. One of the biggest takeaways from today's podcast is that the Bowditch family uses social media to recruit potential employees. Carlie rightly identifies that if she didn't use

Commented [L1]: Marty says Statistica here, but it's Statista.

social media to promote her employment opportunities, she'd be limiting the pool of people that she could attract. She believes that employees want a good picture of the culture of the farm before they even apply. The Bowditch family also employs some really interesting strategies to help with employee retention and commitment. For those who stay until the end of harvest, they're rewarded with a \$2.00 an hour bonus that's retroactive and applies to all the hours they worked that year. They have even offered their long-term employees a pension plan. These are really forward-thinking incentives to encourage good employees to stick around and be part of the farm and be emotionally invested in the business. And my last point, digitizing your farm accounting and field records has a ton of benefits. Now, Joline talked about this from loving the accessibility of digitization. She can even access her records and her payroll when she's out of the country in the US visiting her daughter. All she needs is her laptop and an internet connection. Carlie also said something similar, that she really appreciates the ease of accessing the digital records. A big positive she identifies is that she can create a seeded acreage report using AgExpert Field by drawing maps of her fields in the program and by importing the GPS data. As long as she's on top of the data entry, creating the report is about an hour-long process for her, and helps her family easily submit their crop insurance forms. She saved tons of time by exercising this. Carlie also adds that the data she's collected through digitization will make the future business decisions even easier. Effectively, she can look back on her records and stack them in an easy, digestible way, and there's no fear of losing the famous scribbler that we all have behind the tractor seat. If you've listened to this podcast before, you can probably see where I'm going with this: digitizing records is a big win on many levels.

0:37:45.1

Well, that's it for today. Big thanks to Carlie and Joline for sharing so much valuable information with us. If you like what you heard today, make sure to like and subscribe to this podcast. We'd love to hear your feedback. Until next time, dream, grow, and thrive.

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