

## Crop Production

# Maximize time with high-tech tools

By WILLIE VOGT

**A** LOT of people have Joe Cunningham's cell phone number. This Ag Management Solutions consultant for Gooseneck Implement, a John Deere dealer with eight stores in North Dakota, is a popular guy come spring. "My phone starts ringing from 7

## Key Points

- Consider an in-cab cheat sheet to maximize precision ag tools.
- Training is gaining in value for more farmers and dealers.
- The cell phone remains a handy link to tech support.

a.m. to 9 p.m. most days in the spring," he says during a ride through the North Dakota countryside east of Stanley.

But what challenge does he face most? It's the return of the same question over and over. "We get customers who call with the same questions each spring, and it's usually the same customers," Cunningham says. He's not

complaining. In fact, he wants to be sure customers have the information they need when they need it, and not wait for Cunningham's return phone call.

Just incorporating some simple steps into your operation can help you get going faster and avoid the need to contact your tech rep — no matter what brand you use.

## A few tips

Farmers with precision ag tools on their farms should consider that they're another computer to use in the tractor or combine cab. If you've got cheat sheets next to the office computer, why wouldn't you have something in one of the many cab compartments in your machines?

One tip to consider is to create a cheat sheet and laminate it so it's protected from the weather. Perhaps it can be small enough to fit in a pocket, but make sure you can find it each spring. Cunningham says the simple questions go away once the season gets rolling.

"Usually the calls end up with me saying, 'Push this button. Check the display; now push that button,'" he says. Those simple instructions could easily be put on a sheet you review.

Another useful idea is training. "We're actually considering how we should change our training when someone buys a new machine," Cunningham says. "Not sure where we'll go with it, but the first time someone has a new machine, that training should be in-depth."

Having a tech and your dealer teach you the system the first time out may be time well spent. However, any training offered at the local dealer is something to consider. It's so important that dealers of all brands are revamping their stores to include better training rooms.

## Maximize those tools

Any tricks you use to put these tools to good use are going to be worth the investment. As you upgrade the technology, understanding the workings of existing tools can improve your uptime as you add more equipment. And there's always that help at the other end of the cell phone: "It's still all about service in this market," Cunningham adds.



**SUPPORT SYSTEM:** Fritz Weisenberger (left), Gooseneck Implement, Stanley, N.D., chats with Craig Wienbar and Joe Cunningham about precision ag tools as they check wheat condition near harvest. Cunningham is the AMS tech support go-to guy for Gooseneck.


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