

## AgChat Inspirations

Where does one go to learn from some of the very best in ag social media? Where does one go to network with other social media advocates across the U.S. and Canada? Where does one go to learn and be inspired?

The AgChat Conference

"Empowering a connected community of Agvocates" - AgChat's mission statement. Charlotte, NC was host to around 80 advocates from the U.S. and Canada. They arrived in hopes of networking, to learn, to inspire and be inspired.

And we were not disappointed.



AgChat attendees in Charlotte, NC

This was my second year attending AgChat. Last year's conference was held in Kansas City and it was that conference where I made the decision to start a blog. Prior to that conference, I never dreamed of being a blogger! Excited, nervous, and naive, I jumped in "the blogging world" with both feet. The past year has been a journey of learning, asking questions, seeking advice, observing, making mistakes and sometimes just "gritting my teeth and plowing forward" into the social media arena. And I need to thank A [Kansas Farm Mom](#) for her mentoring during the past year. I look up to her and the success she has had with her blog! And, yes, she was at AgChat! Be sure to check out

her blog.

And not only have I not looked back, but I have no regrets - not even one . . .



Michele Payne Knoper speaking at AgChat Conference

The kickoff morning, [Michele Payn-Knoper, author of "No More Food Fights!"](#), got us all thinking about what our end social media goal is. By knowing where we wanted to be, we could then use tools to get there. All of us were asked to write down our end goal and then we could create our own "roadmap" to get there. On my Strategic Agvocacy Roadmap, I wrote - **"To communicate better in regards to agriculture using social media"**. It may sound pretty simple, but the reality is it can be a very difficult task. Bottom line - **I want to be a better blogger and be better at communicating** with others via social media.

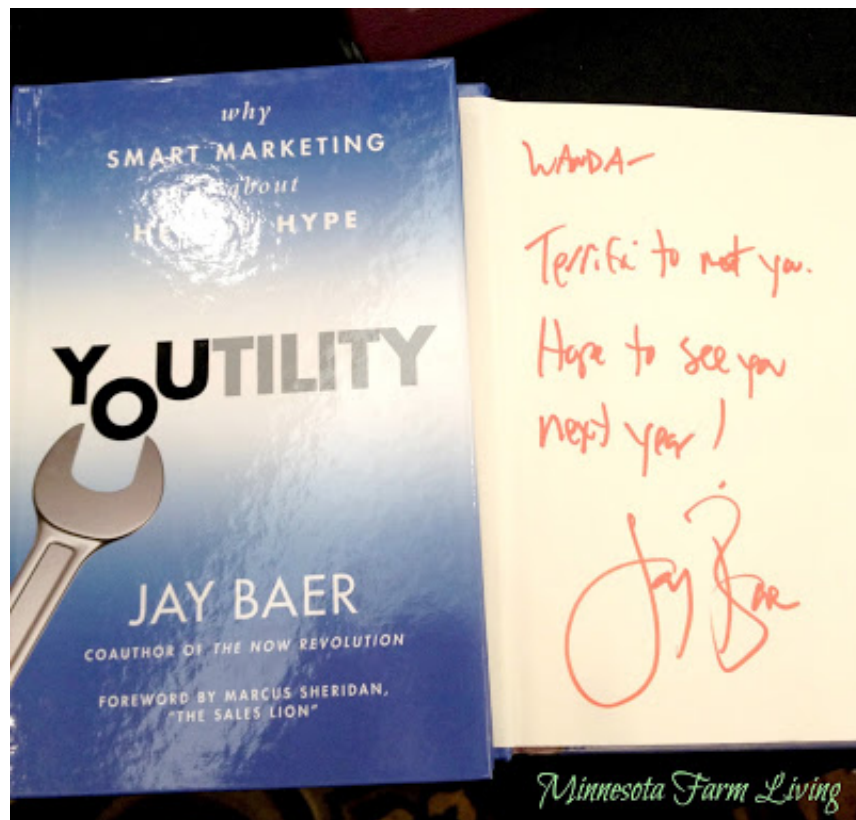


Jay Baer speaking at AgChat Conference  
on Youtiity

And there was no better way to start this roadmap than to listen to Jay Baer as one of the keynote speakers. [Jay Baer is author of a New York Times best selling book, \*\*Youtility\*\*](#). Jay is a social media marketing guru. His message was timely. Using the Youtility marketing system, our goal is to be useful, so useful that people would pay us for the value we bring. He told us relationships are created with information, not people. And for us to be useful, there must be a need. And it is up to us to find out what the need is.

My takeaway? Have down-to-earth, respectful conversations with people so we can learn what their need is. And that need may very well be the "need for information". As a result, we can be "useful" by providing a solution to their need(s). Baer stated, "content is fire, social media is gasoline". The number of people we can reach through social media is sometimes beyond our imagination.

Each of us received his signed book, **Youtility**!



Our own signed copy of the book Youtility  
by Jay Baer

Besides the keynote speakers, we were able to attend numerous breakout learning sessions. There were four sessions running concurrently, which allowed us to choose sessions that interested us. These sessions were facilitated and led by some of the leading ag social media people. These facilitators were very credible because they truly are in the trenches of social media.



Lara Durben and Jenny Schweigert  
presenting a Pinterest session

One of the most eye opening sessions that was presented to the whole group was "Conversations Beyond the Choir". Four people, with no direct agricultural ties, were chosen from the North Carolina area. The panel members included a chef, a mommy blogger, a foodie blogger and an extension educator. The purpose of this group was to give us in agriculture their perspectives on what and how they make food decisions. Sometimes, we in agriculture, are just too close to what we do. We find it hard to see or hear another's perspective on food choices.



Janice Person

Perhaps the most interesting and somewhat uncomfortable comments came when they talked about making food choice decisions and the subject came up about what they look for in making meat purchases. One of the panelists told us she was a vegetarian and does not buy meat. She wasn't necessarily opposed to meat, but rather, she didn't want "to bother researching what was in or not in the meat" and so it was just easier to not buy it. And two of the other panelists basically agreed with her and said the same thing. It was only the chef that said he buys and eats meat freely. Wow . . . Needless to say, this was quite the discussion point amongst us attendees. It was a learning moment for us all.



Wanda Patsche, Sara Hewitt and Lara Durben

I loved being at AgChat! Not just because of the learning, but the people you meet. I met new people and I also met people who I have only talked to in social media. Now I could put a face to them. And Minnesota had a good representation. Among all the Minnesotans, there were two gals whom I admire. Lara Durben, with [Minnesota Turkey Growers](#) and Sara Hewitt, an intern with [Minnesota Farm Bureau](#) and who also farms with her husband and his family were there. They are

both bloggers! Lara's blog is [www.myothermoreexcitingself.wordpress.com](http://www.myothermoreexcitingself.wordpress.com) and Sara's is [www.hewittfarmsinc.wordpress.com](http://www.hewittfarmsinc.wordpress.com). Check out their blogs!



Laura Daniels, a keynote speaker at  
AgChat Conference

Our ending keynote speaker was Laura Daniels, who with her husband, own a dairy farm in Wisconsin. Her speech, "Needed, Hitch Pins!" was both funny and inspiring. As I sat listening to Laura, I looked around the room. My breath was literally taken away when I thought about who was in my presence. I actually thought to myself, "why am I here?" But it is because of those people, in that room and what they unselfishly shared with us, that I am inspired . . .