

**2017 ACORN Conference & Trade Show
Best Western Glengarry, Truro, NS**

Workshop Title: The Butcher's Dilemma - Part II

Presenter: Andrew Sedlak

Executive Summary: Behind the scenes of today's meat industry, there is lots of controversy: controversial research, controversial trends, and controversial partnerships. Dive deep into this not-so-rosy picture to understand the forces behind the movement of common practice away from the human-scale, the implications of this movement, and how then to act to maintain, or bring back, the integrity of our food system.

Part I - current state of affairs in the Canadian meat industry

Part II - what's happening behind the scenes: our lens - the future; the ideas presented in this session may seem outstretched due to the small population in Atlantic Canada, but these pieces *are* moving and *will* come this direction

Detailed Notes:

Some examples of current big players who are changing the system:

- Amazon & Whole Foods - union has been created
- Google & WalMart - union last 6 months
- The Chef's Plate
- Uber Eats
- Blue Apron
- The Athlete's Kitchen
- Foodora
- Memphis Meats
- Beyond Meat

These players are attempting to simplify the grocery retail game with the internet. Take for example the fact that Sears and Future Shop are closing down due to the fact that their business model doesn't fit into the current consumer landscape. There is currently a 75% fail rate in food businesses in Canada. In-home service and entertainment are being heavily favoured.

Education gives people a sense of worth for their time. There is very often a reflection of an individual's education in the choices they make - that can manifest in votes being made with their wallet/dollar. There is a major reconstruction happening that will alter the food game forever.

Ownership of business *location* that a business operates out of is now very unlikely, and as such the license will be temporary. This leads to the demise of 'Mom & Pop' shops. Choices are coming down to cost and simplicity - cheaper and more accessible options vs ethical and conscious decisions.

Is the next logical step in the food game to use your phone to access food/groceries?

The food retail game is propped up on minimum wage jobs that are increasing across the country. All pricing decisions now reflect this equation. Low wage relief in the tip-based service industry is necessary for business owners to scrape by and be profitable.

Tech prices are dropping in comparison to increasing labour costs. Where will this lead us? Away from a focus on people, and toward a focus on technology.

Simplifying consumer lives has been and should be the service focus going forward. How does this affect the social capital?

In 2014, Adam came across YamChops in Toronto, a vegetarian butcher shop, which had surprising replicas. Vast research is going into meatless meat replicas: Memphis Meat is making "deathless meat"; could it become replacement for factory farmed meat?

Not everything needs to be rosy - face the fear and discuss how it makes you feel and how you can change it. As a butcher, Adam is questioning whether or not he wants to keep doing this. He has worked with 4 different ranches trying to set up a profitable system in Alberta. The cause was aborted because the equation would not balance. None-the-less, there is power in numbers - team up with like-minded individuals to solve problems at the ground level, in your community.

Q - Have you come across a provincially inspected mobile butcher shop?

A - Adam has heard of them, but not seen one in action. The setup would likely cost you your \$ and your body; the job has taken a major physical toll after 15 years (Adam is only 30 years old)

Q - Can tech make your job physically easier?

A - Yes, but the costs are incredibly high

Q - Can the margins improve with a shared model/co-op?

A - Adam and the previously mentioned group tried in Alberta, but the biggest problem, comes down to personal brand and ego that has gotten in the way of progressive decision making or problem solving

Q - There is more and more movement toward technology which is winning out against working humans who lose their ability to afford food, etc. Is there a food revolution on its way? Think about the harvest parties and group labour efforts of yore.

A - If the progression continues, governments will have complete control and will own

the entire system. This is a problem everywhere. Big players with money and control influence governments. Logic would say that \$ has taken control of the government sector. Ask questions about what concerns you and talk to your MPs. Be informed about what bills are being put forward and passed; STAY CONNECTED.

Q - We're seeing the same situation across the board; how can you make a business with all of your values intact *and* bring community with you - it's exhaustive.

A - Agreed - it's not a rosy picture.

Q - How much do you have to deal with inspectors in your work?

A - There are 3 inspectors (3 levels of inspection) to deal with, and 1 person just to do the associated paperwork.

Comments:

- Butchery is not an attractive industry, however there is an advantage in Nova Scotia; legal on-farm butchery. The industry needs to make government aware that we want to keep that. The public hears "food safety" preached where the large scale method and controls are in fact where the issues come into the system. Community needs to be better informed. Education - find a way to get to the schools and reach kids (liken to the success and awareness of recycling programs).
- A facilitator would go a long way to bridge gaps between agriculture and community.
- 'Meatless meat' - what will be the bi-product?
- Adam has worked for an employer who was very conscious about their practices and decisions, and went so far as to not allow the word 'slaughter' but instead used the word 'harvest' in their abattoir
- Initial possibility to crack open markets; technology can be used to bring together diverse and specialised customers and suppliers; however we are losing sight of what is real and what is not, and there is significant risk. "Rise of the Bots"
- Community, education and awareness - there exists a rural and urban divide; many in the room would love to pair up with rural/urban partners - Get Away Farm, Halifax. "Take the show on the road" and make a character to involve others in the story. Adam has created a 'character' in his work that he employs to help connect with his customers and tell the stories and importance of what he does.

Letter to the environmentally conscious farmer (summarized):

"Technology is present - embrace it to service consumers you know and love. The next generation won't fear technology. Farmers have enough work without trying to stay up

to date on the tech revolution. Be mindful of alternative energies. Take an active role in creating and finding the best foods for you and your body.” - Adam Sedlak

Build confidence and have confidence in what you are doing and what you believe in.