

CAMA'S AGRI-MARKETER OF THE YEAR

by Jeanine Moyer, Synthesis

Rob Hannam learned early in his career that collaboration is the recipe for success. Throughout his more than 30 years in the agri-food marketing and communications industry, he's applied his collaborative approach to lead countless clients, organizations, companies and industry stakeholders to achieve success.

As founder and president of **Synthesis Agri-Food Network**, Hannam leads a diverse and talented team to provide marketing communications and consulting services to the agri-food sector. As a consultant he operates with the belief that effective stakeholder consultation is key to the future success of Canadian agriculture. He has worked with more than 50 different groups, sharing his talent for collaboration that has had an immense impact in the industry. He has led boards and management teams to become more effective, impacting the industry as a whole.

Hannam is also a partner and CEO of agtech start-up **Farm Health Guardian**, an animal health and biosecurity management software system that helps producers and food companies improve animal health and reduce disease risks.

Starting his career at **First Line Seeds**, Hannam helped the company achieve the number one soybean market share position in Canada. There, he developed fundamental marketing and communications skills that would serve him throughout his career – a deep respect for farmers and the curiosity to ask questions to understand what customers really need. During his time at First Line Seeds, Hannam also led the team to create new markets for Ontario soybean growers with the development of identity preserved (IP) food grade soybeans. He championed the

creation of the NutriLine food grade soybean export business, including the development of a 13,000-tonne capacity production facility.



Rob Hannam

In the next phase of his career, Hannam made a mark on both sides of the border for **Monsanto**. In the U.S., Rob effectively managed marketing for the company's soybean brands across the Midwest and northeastern U.S. Back in Canada, he adeptly managed sales and marketing for the company's seed and biotechnology products.

With sales experience under his belt, Hannam moved into a marketing and consulting role with a major ag-focused agency and never looked back. Over the years he has shared his marketing savvy to the benefit of countless clients and agriculture organizations.

Harnessing his entrepreneurial spirit, Hannam established **Synthesis Agri-Food Network** in 2009. Building this agri-marketing business is a career highlight for Hannam. He says he's most proud of the team he's developed at Synthesis and Farm Health Guardian. "I'm privileged to work with such a talented team of great people," says Hannam. "It's been an extremely rewarding journey to build a team from the ground up, watching people grow and advance their career. It's such a great feeling

to be a small part of their success."

Recently, Hannam tested his strategic planning abilities, applying them to his own business and the outcome has been a recalibrated approach for Synthesis with a transition from consulting to more of a marketing communications focus. This transition was inspired by his team, "thanks to years of consulting and the lineup of industry specialists Synthesis has curated, we've built a roster of employees and consultants to serve the agri-food industry." As an entrepreneur with first-hand experience in ag-tech start-ups, Hannam is also harnessing his own experiences to help clients discover and implement marketing solutions that work.

The Agri-Marketer of the Year award has provided Hannam with the occasion to reflect on his rewarding career. Looking ahead, he says he's keeping an eye on new opportunities that digital technology will offer the industry, specifically how new applications like precision robotics, machine learning and other digital tools can be used on today's busy farms. The main challenges, he predicts, will be the ability for ag-tech providers to find their product-market fit and how the people or cultural aspects of adopting new technology are handled so that these innovations can earn a spot in the day-to-day management of farm businesses.

Hannam has a proven track record of developing marketing solutions for the agricultural industry. Many of his achievements can be credited to his collaborative skills and reputation for bringing diverse people together to solve problems and achieve success. Congratulations Rob! **AM**