

**Enhancing Career Development Event Preparation Using Snapchat:  
A Snapshot of Identification Components of Various Career Development Events**

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## **Introduction**

Career Development Events (CDEs) aim to enable students to think critically, clearly communicate, and perform in an effective manner (National FFA, 2013). There are 24 various CDEs that occur at the National FFA Convention on an annual basis. Many of the CDEs include an identification portion to the event. For example, the floriculture CDE has over 140 items that could be included in the identification portion of the event. The veterinary science CDE has over 350 potential identification items. Training teams to identify that many items could prove difficult to an agricultural education teacher who also has other components to their agricultural education program. Finding efficient, effective techniques to aid in preparing CDE teams could alleviate some of the time commitments agricultural teachers are already involved in. Croom, Moore, and Armbruster (2003) concluded that teachers and students alike are finding it difficult to develop a training schedule in which all teachers can be present. Furthermore, some teachers surveyed in this study reported spending 10 or more hours of time after school training teams. Croom et al. (2003) posited that teachers could face burnout if they spend too much of their personal time in preparing students for CDEs. Do any technologies exist that could alleviate the amount of time it takes to train CDEs in an effective manner?

Incorporating technology into the classroom can be an effective way to engage students in the preparation process for CDEs. The U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment (1995) reported that incorporating technology into the teaching and learning process is an important step in the continuous investment in educational technology. Trilling and Hood (1999) reported that the use of telecommunications hardware and software enhances student learning. Utilizing current technology can aid agricultural educators within their respective programs around the country. Grossek (2009) pointed out many advantages to utilizing web 2.0 technologies for education including cost reduction, faster access to information, low level of complexity, reliability in continuous usage, as well as less time and energy spent on information management (p. 480). McCubbins, Anderson, and Wells (2014) utilized Snapchat to enhance safety in an agricultural mechanics laboratory. The researchers found that the students enjoyed utilizing a social media platform to reinforce safety in the agricultural mechanics laboratory. This led the researchers to develop alternative ways to utilize social media applications in the teaching and learning process. This innovative idea aligns with AAAE National Research Agenda priority area number 2, *Technologies, Practices & Products* as well as priority area number 5, *Efficient & Effective Programs* (Doerfert, 2011). With these challenges in preparing students for CDE's, could the use of a social media application help agricultural education teachers be more efficient in the training teams for this component of the agricultural education program?

## **How it Works**

Snapchat can be used by secondary and post-secondary agricultural educators in several ways. Secondary agricultural educators can utilize Snapchat to help prepare students for various CDEs that include an identification component in the event. Agricultural education teachers must create

a Snapchat account using a valid email address. Once a username and password have been created the teacher can begin adding friends. The teachers are then able to send or post a photo to their friends or on the story section of their Snapchat account. This enables students to view the picture, and respond with the correct identification of the item in the snap or story. The photographs in the story are on a timer between one and ten seconds and can be viewed as many times necessary within a 24 hour period. Snapchat users can delete the photo on their story at any time. The instructor has the option to save each photo posted to their story to their smartphone or tablet for review at a later date. McCubbins, Anderson, and Wells (2014) noted a review session at the end of the semester would be beneficial by simply saving all the safety violations documented within Snapchat. Once all the identification components have been uploaded to Snapchat they could be saved and included into a presentation or reloaded to Snapchat for a more comprehensive assessment of where students' current identification skills fall.

### **Results to Date**

Snapchat for CDE preparation was field tested by pre-service and in-service teachers in the spring of 2014. Pre-service teachers noted that the idea was an extremely unique way to incorporate social media technology into the teaching and learning process. Current in-service teachers reported faster retention of identification components to various CDE's offered through FFA. One current in-service teacher reported less time spent focusing on the identification portion of CDEs and better identification knowledge retention.

### **Future Plans/ Advice to Others**

Privacy of the educator and the students should be considered when utilizing Snapchat technology. Snapchat provides users the options to only receive pictures or videos from other people they add to their friends list. Strict parameters should be used when utilizing social media platforms between teachers and students. Continual evaluation of the effectiveness of the technology on the preparation for CDE's should be evaluated. It should be noted that Snapchat is very different from other social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. Pictures uploaded to either of those are permanently on the platform. With Snapchat, the photo disappears after a set timer. This allows the instructor to upload photos of plants or materials for identification purposes and the student must identify it within the set timer parameters.

### **Costs/Resources Needed**

Snapchat is a free social media application available on smartphones and tablets. Users of this free application must have an active email address. Data usage or wireless access is required to utilize the Snapchat features. Fees for data or wireless access on wireless technology vary with each provider. Aside from the costs of owning a smartphone or tablet, costs associated with this CDE preparation technique are minimal. Costs associated with traditional preparation for CDE identification portions of various contests could potentially outweigh the minimal cost associated with incorporating technologies such as Snapchat into CDE preparation.

## References

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