



Kansas Rural Center
SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE
MANAGEMENT GUIDES

Marketing the Market

"Marketing is the whole business, taken from the customer's point of view." - Peter Drucker

Coming Together

How can the market, vendors, media, local business and the community collaborate to create a thriving, vibrant marketplace each week?

Page 2

Maximize Your Business



What factors draw shoppers in and which can send them running?

Page 3

Focus on the Market Experience

Are you doing all you can to make your market a welcoming, lively and convenient place to shop?

Page 4



Getting the Word Out



What are the best methods to get the buzz going about your market?

Page 5

Market Newsletters

Paper or e-mail: which is right for your market and what do shoppers want you to include?

Page 6



Connecting with Your Community

Much can be gained through partnerships with your community. What might work for your market?

Page 6

Marketing Principles

Most markets have precious few advertising and promotion dollars and therefore need to seek the biggest bang for their bucks. Even if your market is blessed with a large ad budget, you will want to spend it effectively. The following general principles of marketing can be helpful in guiding your market in getting the most from your money.

80/20 rule

Keep the 80/20 rule in mind: 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers. (Koch, 1998). Getting to know the names and preferences of this core group solidifies their commitment to your market and helps to ensure they keep coming back week after week.

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is far more effective than paid advertising. If a market is well organized, customers will perform the bulk of advertising and marketing in their conversations with friends and acquaintances (Corum, 1999). Encourage frequent shoppers to bring their friends and family and offer them flyers to share.

Get Covered

An industry rule-of-thumb is that editorial coverage is seven times as valuable as paid coverage (Corum, 2001). Your market's money might be best spent by hosting special events. If your event is based on market products and offers something for consumers (demonstrations, recipes, giveaways), chances are the local media will cover it. That article or radio

story will be noticed and remembered more than an advertisement.

Advertise Wisely

Effective paid advertisements rely on repeated messages with a simple, consistent message delivered through a medium (newspaper, radio station, TV station, sign) that your targeted customers use regularly. On average it takes at least six exposures before a consumer responds to an advertisement. Your market might want to consider prominently placed, uncluttered signs as your first marketing priority. Having a logo or a clip art image you consistently use to symbolize the market will increase the likelihood your shoppers will notice and remember your ads and signs.



WHO ARE YOUR PARTNERS?

Farmers' markets are multi-levelled partnerships. Beginning with the farmer's connection with the land; if care is not exercised, the land may lose productivity. The vendor is in partnership with the market; and again, if care is not exercised, productivity may suffer. There are also interdependent partnerships between the market and shoppers, media, local business and the community as a whole. When we ignore any one of these connections, the market and its vendors may not achieve their potential.

Through marketing the market, many of the preceding relationships can be strengthened. When vendors make the effort to market the market as a whole (see ideas at right), the market is able to fully realize its promotions—be it special events, newsletters, media coverage or other activity.

The market can, in turn, market its vendors to a wider audience. Farmers can be profiled in newsletters and on the web, included in media kits, and celebrated in special market events. Once the community learns details about a vendor, it's more likely they will spend their dollars with that person. Markets have every rea-

son to highlight specialty producers—they're what make the market unique.

The market and local media also have every reason to collaborate. If you are hosting a special event, that is something the community will hopefully be interested in and the media will take notice. The market can be an asset to the press, as well. By creating a media packet (see page 5) and building relationships with reporters, the market can save the day when news and story ideas are slim.

If attendance at your market is sizable, local businesses should appreciate the traffic you bring to the area. Considering approaching these businesses with ideas for cross-promotions. Ask stores to place market posters in their windows and offer to distribute store coupons good only on market day.

And finally the market's partnership with its shoppers. Convenience is the buzzword of the day—grocery stores are open 24-hours a day, carry every imaginable fruit and vegetable, and even offer complete ready-to-eat meals. Are you making it as easy as possible for folks to shop with you? (see page 4)



Selling is a Job Interview

It's true! Shoppers generally have little idea of what it takes to bring your products to market. If your product display has caught their eye, they then turn that eye on you. What image are you conveying? Like it or not, they evaluate the care you've taken with your appearance and apply that to the care you take with your product. Are you "saying" what you want people to "hear"?

- Remember you represent your farm
- Offer friendly, knowledgeable service: remember names, invite them back next week
- Aim for a short wait time; when things get busy, acknowledge those waiting
- Be a picture of health and cleanliness
- Go in costume if it's your style and not too outrageous
- If you aren't experiencing a comfortable atmosphere at the market, neither are your customers
- Be enthusiastic
- Avoid eating and smoking

Salesmanship

Every so often, step outside your stall. Walk the market as a shopper and evaluate what customers are drawn towards. Some vendors always attract a crowd; take time to notice what you might be able to improve about your own presentation.

- Keep active
- Place your scale up front to avoid turning your back
- Orient cover to give shade to your customers
- Know your products: how are they grown or made; how to best store and ways to prepare them
- Build loyalty: give some free extras for your best customers
- Offer recipes and interesting facts
- Give away a new offering for your shoppers to sample; ask them to come back next week with feedback
- Notice what's already in their bags—what might you have to complement their purchases
- Offer a sample: "Have you ever tried ..." then follow-up with an interesting fact about the product
- If you get a complaint comparing your price with a competitor's, respond politely with "I believe they know the value of their product."

Stall Display

Everyone has a personality; your challenge is to make yours come to life through your choice of colors, materials and props. Chances are someone else offers similar products and you want shoppers to notice you.

- Keep it high and watch it fly—your products gather more attention when your display has many levels beginning with crates raised off the ground up and ending with an element at about shoulder height
- Restock after each rush—when things begin to look sparse, start consolidating
- Employ color contrast to enhance eye appeal—if most of your available products are of a similar color add props or purchase a bouquet from a flower vendor
- Use signs: farm name, state prices next to product, add product characteristics

Vendors Marketing the Market

Katherine Kelly and Joan Vibert, vendors at Kansas City's Brookside Farmers' Market, offer the following possibilities for vendors to contribute to the success of the market as a whole.

- Promote special events to customers
- Use your personal networks to promote the market as a whole
- Do mailings/e-mailings to your own customer list—too not only your own horn but that of the market as well
- Include the market in all personal business promotions: business cards, flyers, mailings
- Encourage customers to sign-up for the market email or mailing list
- Promote customer interactions at the market to build a sense of community
- Involve customers in special market events
- Recruit new vendors
- Announce the market on your voice mail
- Volunteer for market duties
- Recruit customers to help with market organization, to serve on the board or to plan a specific market event
- Ask customers to serve on the market board



Create a Vibrant Market Experience

The goal is to draw as many shoppers as possible on market day. After recruiting sufficient vendors who can bring the freshest local products, you might want to focus on making the market an exciting and interesting place to be.

Numerous factors can contribute to a lively marketplace including sights, sounds and aromas...

- Invite musicians and “pay” them a gift of market produce and products
- Create a Chef at Market program where the chef creates dishes with market products—try to offer shoppers a sample
- Consider activities like theater, balloons, play equipment, face painting, petting zoos for kids
- Provide places to eat and sit along with shade
- Invite school bands and tours
- Explore having a market during evening-in-the park concerts
- Host parades such as a Halloween Costume March
- Decorate the market
- Make whatever you provide beautiful ... bouquet for restroom ... nice seating
- Recognize that aromas of ready to eat foods such as BBQ or sausage biscuits are a big draw
- Provide a “Community Booth” for local not-for-profits to share information with the community

Serve Convenience

While farmers’ markets may have the highest quality products available in town, our shoppers are accustomed to all the conveniences of the modern grocery store. Consider if your market is doing all it can to address the following issues:

- Convenient hours
- Ample, close parking
- Manageable packages
- Assistance with carrying large purchases
- Shade and shelter
- Eliminate congested areas
- Accessible for the elderly
- Tasty breakfast with a place to sit, eat and talk
- Clean, accessible restrooms

Signs and Banners

Signs and banners can be significant investments for a market. If designed with care and sited well, they can also be invaluable marketing tools in informing passersby of your locations, days and hours of operation. Working with a professional increases your odds of crafting durable, effective and attractive products. Keep the following in mind when creating your next sign or banner:

- Use a simple, consistent logo or image
- Use an easy to read font
- Present information in a clear, logical sequence
- Overload them too early with too many messages and they will give up
- Confuse them and they will ignore the message
- On market days, utilize yard-type signs at key intersections to guide customers
- Consider seeking sponsors





Getting the Word Out

Your market's atmosphere is vibrant and much thought has been given to the needs of your customers. Now it's time to focus on letting your community know who and what can be found at your market. Studies show that your best avenues to achieving this goal are word of mouth and media coverage. While advertising can be effective, it requires a significant advertising budget—on average it takes at least six exposures before a consumer responds to an advertisement.

Media Promotion

- Prepare a preseason press kit that includes information about the upcoming season—dates, locations, hours, a list of market products, a chart outlining when fruits and vegetables are in season, a schedule of special events as well as a short history of the market and a few vendor profiles
- Follow up with a phone call
- Submit a great photo
- Send out press releases for special events or when key crops (sweet corn, tomatoes, peaches) come into season
- Take time to build relationships with key media personnel—find out if the food section editor is interested in a recipe of the week, see if the garden writer needs leads on the new and hot perennials.
- When someone from the media contacts you offer, “How may I help you?” and be sure to follow through with requests, promote creative story angles and upcoming special events
- Take advantage of community calendar listings in newspapers, on radio stations and websites
- Send a gift basket to the editor (check first, some companies don't allow this)
- Acknowledge coverage by sending a thank you or bouquet

Word of Mouth Advertising

- Consistently satisfy customers—they will rave about the market to friends, family and coworkers
- Turn core customers into ambassadors—ask if they would share flyers with friends and coworkers
- Reward bringing a friend—every time they bring someone new, enter them into a monthly market basket drawing
- Consider selling T-shirts, caps, tote bags—they are great walking billboards for the market
- Solicit letters to the editor from your shoppers, nutritionist, and others that recognize the benefits of local agriculture

Participate in Community Events

- Create a promotional display for your market to exhibit during garden and home shows and health fairs—don't forget to have flyers about the upcoming season to hand out
- Enter a market theme float in parades
- Create a produce display for the county fair
- Offer to read an agriculture-themed book during story time at your public library, local bookstore or school classroom

Bring the Market to Your Shoppers Electronically or the Old Fashioned Way

Market newsletters are a great method of reminding your shoppers of why they love the market. The trend in this type of communication is the e-newsletter delivered via email. Many companies offer e-newsletter services with affordable rates based on the number of subscribers on your list. And they make the process of creating a newsletter fairly simple. When compared to traditional newsletter costs, copying and mailing, e-newsletters are a bargain. Plus if you have access to digital images, color photos can bring your market to life. Whether you go with paper or electronic distribution, keep the following points in mind:

- Include a banner with market name, logo, date and contact information and be consistent in style and with your publication schedule-monthly, weekly
- Highlight upcoming events
- Share what is currently available and offer tips on selection and storage
- Incorporate farmer profiles, and news from your vendors
- Bring readers into the “family” by soliciting recipes and testimonials
- Offer your vendors the opportunity to include coupons or special offers-they’re an excellent way to move abundant product
- Include a sign-up box on your website and those of the city and any of your sponsors
- Recruit readers for specific market volunteer opportunities-coordinate for special events, web design, graphics work to create flyers, even writing the newsletters themselves

References

- Corum, Vance, Marcie Rosenzweig and Eric Gibson. 2001. *The New Farmers’ Market*. New World Publishing. Auburn, California.
- Corum, Vance. 1999. *Small Town Farmers’ Markets*. APA National Conference: Economic Development Division.
- Koch, Richard. 1998. *The 80/20 Principle*. Doubleday Publishers. New York, New York.
- Kelly, Katherine and Joan Vibert. 2004. Presentation at Kansas Farmers’ Market Conference. Lawrence, Kansas.



Kansas Rural Center Publication MG10A.1

The authors of this publication are Jerry Jost and Mercedes Taylor-Puckett. The Kansas Rural Center provided support with USDA’s Risk Management Agency provided funding.

The Kansas Rural Center is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through education, research and advocacy. The Kansas Rural Center cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of the soil and water. The Rural Center is committed to economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable rural culture. For more information, contact the Kansas Rural Center at P.O. Box 133, Whiting, Kansas 66552 or (785) 873-3431.

Connecting the Community to Your Market

Chances are your market is one of the biggest weekly gathering spots in town. Sharing this forum with your community can earn your market goodwill and provide countless marketing opportunities. Whether you provide a stall that not for profit groups may use or offer to collect excess produce for a food pantry at the end of the market day, reaching out to the community can really pay off.

Partnerships

- Consider designating a weekly stall to a worthy group-you can decide whether it can be used for informational purposes only or if you will permit fund-raising through raffle tickets, bake sales, etc...either way, groups will be delighted to have access to your shoppers and will most likely bring out folks new to the market
- Partner with a food pantry or soup kitchen to highlight the issue of hunger in your community-host a food drive or glean excess market produce to donate
- Collaborate with a local restaurant or cooking school-have a “shop with the chef day” where shoppers can tour the market with a culinary expert to learn tips and receive recipes
- Invite your county’s extension office to participate-Master Foods graduates can offer food preservation information and the Master Gardeners give great horticultural advice
- Don’t forget to publicize these appearances in a media release

Local Businesses

- Banks are required by law to do a certain amount of community service. Talk to the neighborhood bank and ask them to sponsor a special event, musicians, flyers or mailings
- See if local merchants will put market posters in their windows or consider placing flyers in shopping bags
- Inquire with the city about including flyers in municipal bills