

AGRI-FACTS

Practical Information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

October 2016

Agdex 846-3

Your Sell Sheet

This factsheet will help business owners create promotional information about their products or services in the format of a one-page “sell sheet.” You will learn how to define your target audience, convey the key benefits you are selling and create an effective sell sheet.

Why promote your business

To succeed, any business must make its products or services known to potential buyers. When creating marketing materials, you will find that your success depends on setting the right tone for your brand, creating a compelling sales message and making sure you reach the right audience with your message.

Your target audience

You may be tempted to set aggressive targets such as reaching “everyone in the province” or getting your products into “retailers across Canada,” but the truth is that starting small can pay big dividends.

Reaching a large audience often takes enormous financial resources. Many businesses starting out may not have the money to reach a broad audience right away. Entering the national retail scene also requires broad distribution, which can be challenging for businesses that are not ready to ramp up production.

Segmenting your target audiences into smaller, more manageable groups can help make your marketing more productive, since you have the ability to target the consumers most likely to buy.

How do you find your best audience? Research is a great way to discover the potential audience segments

important to your business. Groups can be classified based on your customers’ motivation, the unique demographics of your market or how your product meets consumer needs and trends (also refer to the Alberta Agriculture factsheet *Market Research*, Agdex 848-6 – [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex7222](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex7222)).

If you have a current customer base, much can be learned by reviewing your buyer data. Evaluate which segments purchase the most and see if certain characteristics about those customers stand out. Also look at segments that currently underperform in terms of sales but where there may be opportunities to increase your market.

When identifying your target audiences, be specific, but not so specific that you only have a handful of potential contacts in a group. You can segment target audiences in a number of ways:

- demographics (age range, occupation, income, etc.)
- geography (proximity to your business, those in a certain province, by climate, etc.)
- lifestyle patterns (interests, beliefs, hobbies, etc.)
- buyer expectations (quality, price, etc.)
- specialized needs (for example, vegan, organic, gluten-free, etc.)

The worksheet *Defining Your Target Audience* (at the end of this factsheet or available as a fillable PDF form – <https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/ldme11302.pdf>) will help you identify your target audiences and what may motivate them to buy.

Creating segmented lists for your target audiences is just one step on the marketing path. Next, learn what motivates these people to buy and then make sure your message is designed to address those needs.

Describe benefits, not just features

For a business starting out, one of the more challenging aspects of marketing can be identifying how best to describe the product or service. All too often, owners want to include a long list of product *features* and not the benefits.

Features are your product's characteristics. For example, the product could be small creamed potatoes, pre-washed and packaged in a microwaveable container. The benefits are the reason why a customer buys your product and how the product helps them. In this example, the buyer then has no preparation or peeling, and the product is convenient, cooks quickly and is packed with nutrition.

When you sell any product, you need to describe your product in a way that addresses a need your customer has. Sometimes called your value proposition, this element is the main reason a potential customer would buy your product.

In thinking about what your product delivers, it is helpful to put yourself in your customer's shoes. To help you determine the benefits your product offers, answer the questions in the worksheet *Defining Product Benefits* (at the end of this factsheet or available as a fillable PDF form – <https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/ldme11303.pdf>).

Now, take the ideas you described in the *Defining Product Benefits* worksheet and see if you can boil them down to a single motivating idea. As a test, determine if you can describe your product and its benefits to someone you met in an elevator in the time it takes the doors to close and open again, which is about 15 seconds or less.

Remember, you have a limited time to capture your audience's attention and present the all-important information that will motivate someone to buy. When capturing the key motivators in a single sentence, consider these hints:

- use simple language
- be clear about your key benefits
- anticipate or answer your customers' questions
- include a unique or compelling story about your product to persuade your buyer

Arriving at a single marketing focus is a challenge. Still, those who do it well often find themselves ahead of their competition.

Sell sheet must-haves

If you have been successful getting your story into one sentence, or a 15-second elevator speech, then it will be easier for you to create a single-page sell sheet.

A sell sheet is an important marketing tool you will use to approach retailers or buyers to give them the quick overview of your product. The sheet should have all information on one side of an 8-1/2 x 11 inch sheet and be in colour.

For example, if you have a food product, think about featuring the following:

- your best-selling products with a short description and attractive photography
- the story of your product, selling the benefits to the consumer
- what makes your product different from others in the same category
- specifications about your product's size and weight, the dimensions and weight of the case or shipping container and (if applicable) the shelf life of the product
- contact information (telephone and e-mail)
- website for customers to get more in-depth information

Remember, this sheet is an overview about your product and should not be overly wordy or too crowded with images. Keep the words to the few powerful ideas needed to sell your idea effectively. It is best to leave the price information out of your sell sheet as this element can outdate the sheet too quickly.

Creating a sell sheet

Your sell sheet must reflect the professionalism of your brand and show you can compete in a complex and crowded marketplace.

You will want to consider the following options:

- hire a creative art director or designer to produce your sell sheet
- hire a professional photographer to photograph your product, plus any key personnel like chefs or owners
- if applicable, work with a food stylist who can make your products look amazing
- hire someone who is familiar with creating marketing pieces for both the food industry and your specialized audience

Staff at Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's (AF) Market Development Team or New Ventures Team can advise you on developing your marketing materials. They can suggest ways of creating materials cost effectively, or they can provide you with tips on how to best present your information. They can also help ensure your products meet industry regulations for packaging and labeling.

If you need a designer or printer to help you create your materials, AF staff can also refer you to a list of contacts in the industry.

A website and/or a sell sheet

Today, websites are a powerful, and often inexpensive, way to present your company and product information. You should have your brand identity and website completed before creating your sell sheet.

A sell sheet does a specific job that a website may not be set up to do; it is a brief, colourful, effective piece you can leave behind during an in-person visit with a retailer or customer. It sells only the main benefits of your product.

A website allows you to present more in-depth material on your company and the products or services you offer, should the customer or retailer want more information.

Some final questions to ask yourself:

Have you been able to get your selling idea down to one or two sentences?

Are you simply listing your products' features or truly expressing the benefits they provide?

If you already have a sell sheet, how current is it? What, if anything, has changed?

Has your customer base evolved? Is your sell sheet still promoting the correct messages?

Do you have new products that are not included on the sheet?

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The development of this factsheet was supported in part by *Growing Forward 2*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

1. Identify who you are talking to *(List your target audiences and provide details about.)*

Characteristic	Customers most likely to buy	Secondary customers	Customers with potential
Age			
Gender			
Income			
Occupation			
Location			

2. Identify your value proposition *(List the factors that motivate your target audience to buy your product.)*

Possible Motivators	Customers most likely to buy	Secondary customers	Customers with potential
Price			
Quality			
Convenience			
Location			
Diet-food preferences			
Customer 'pain-points'			

3. Find your target audiences *(List all possible gathering areas where your target audiences may be.)*

Where	Customers most likely to buy	Secondary customers	Customers with potential
Social Media			
Business groups			
Associations			
Commodity groups			
Events			

4. Reach your target audience *(List all possible information sources (online, printed, etc.) where your target audience may be getting their information.)*

Sources	Customers most likely to buy	Secondary customers	Customers with potential
Websites			
Blogs			
Social media (list all)			
- Facebook			
- Twitter			
- LinkedIn			
- Google+			
- Instagram			
Online news sources			
Community publications			
Magazines/newspapers			
Experts			
Peers			

Answering these questions can help you identify your product benefits.

What exactly are you offering? *(This can be a list of features of your product)*

List what makes your product unique or different

What value, or end-benefit, does your product or service deliver? *(This time, try to communicate the benefits rather than features (eg. convenience, high quality, packed with nutrition))*

Does your product or service solve a problem or 'pain point' your customer has?

Do different audiences have different needs or expectations? *(If so, list by audience).*

Does brand identification motivate your buyers?

How does your product or service compare to others like it? *(Why should the customer buy from you instead of a competitor?)*

Does your product deliver a new experience? *(Describe it)*

Is price a factor in the customer's buying decision? *(If so, how?)*

If you had to identify one thing that is most important in getting your potential customer to buy, what would it be?