

Best practices in marketing

It's all about customers. If you know how to entice them, greet them, and engage them, you'll likely sell to them. The following tips were extracted from an article in the October 2016 issue of the Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia Cooperative e-newsletter.

Greet your customers within 5-15 seconds. If you are assisting another customer, make a point of acknowledging the next customer in line. A quick "Please excuse me for one moment" to the current customer followed by "I will be with you in just a moment" to the next customer, acknowledges the new customer and politely reminds the current customer that you are busy and they need to move along as soon as their sale is complete.

Avoid asking "Can I help you?" If you greet a customer with "Can I help you?" you will undoubtedly receive the knee-jerk reaction, "No thanks, I'm just looking." A customer arrives at your farm store, u-pick operation or farmers' market stall because they have a perceived need that your products can satisfy. A simple "Welcome" or "Good Morning" – recognizes the customer and lets them know that you are available if they need your help.

Give your customers space. Space is tight at farm direct market venues. Farmers' market

vendors especially don't have the luxury of space in their assigned market stall. Your table, banners or other display props can help ensure personal space, but don't hide behind your table. And never sit down or check your phone messages when customers approach. That tells them you are not interested in their business and sends them along to the next vendor or the farm store down the road. Rather, stand up to smile and greet the customer as they enter and lean in or approach them once you have a rapport, or are engaged in conversation.

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Experts say standing at your booth shows you're ready and waiting for business. Engaging your customers in friendly conversation keeps them interested.

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Show your customers that you recognize them. If you know their name, use it! But recognizing a customer does not require knowing their name. “You’re back. Welcome”



Attractive packaging and enticing displays will draw customers to your stall.

or “Good morning, nice to see you again.” Next, pause... When it feels comfortable, use a new product or your samples as a conversation starter to make a sale. An interesting fact about your business or a question that ties into one of your products are also good ways to get the conversation going and trigger a sale.

If you build it they may not come and buy. You need to draw customers in to your market or farmers’ market stall and identify a need before they will buy. There are four key ingredients to successful direct farm marketing:

- **Product** (fantastic, appropriate

value and positioning, offers benefits that fill customer needs);

- **Personality** (friendly, approachable, must like people);
- **Presentation** (proper description, eye-catching displays and merchandizing – red in the centre draws the eye in and up, product height – waist-to-shoulder product placement, full product bins, varying heights within display, good lighting); and
- **Price** (appropriate for target demographic, should reflect all components – value, cost of production, competitor’s price, customer demand). ●

Three small changes for big market impact

You’ve got a great product and your market stall is well-lit and well-stocked, but you’re still not making the sales you think you should be?

Try introducing these three small changes to your usual routine, they could make a world of difference:

1. Stand up. Standing at your farmers’ market booth signals to customers that you are open for business. Don’t read, text or craft while at market – focus on selling, good customer service and maintaining a great looking booth from the start of market through to the end.

2. Use a calculator. Trust is one of the many reasons why customers shop at farmers’ markets. Using a calculator to count out multi-item purchases is one simple way to instill and maintain customer trust. You may be a math whiz but how is a customer to know that?



3. Provide clear product pricing on signs, stickers or tags. People are hesitant to ask about price and are less likely to shop at a booth with unlisted pricing. One gentleman said that, “If a vendor doesn’t advertise their price, I assume it means there is an ‘insider’s price’ for regular customers, and a higher price for someone they don’t know.” A lack of price information introduces doubt. They wonder, “Can I afford it?”, “Why aren’t they showing their prices?” “Does that mean it’s expensive?” The most-cited reason

vendors have for withholding their product pricing information is because they think it is a great opportunity to engage with their customers. Our experience is that you lose more customers than you gain with that strategy.

People are very hesitant to be ‘sold to’ at farmers’ markets. Engaging customers should be an opportunity to talk about what makes your product unique, to tell your farm or business or personal story, or get people excited about something new you are offering. Do yourself, and your customers, a big favour – show your prices from the outset.

Check out additional marketing resources on www.explorelocal.ca under the Tools and Resources tab. ●

Extracted from the [Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia Cooperative e-newsletter](#), October 27, 2016.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT FARMERS' MARKET VENDOR?

*(from the perspective and
experience of a Market Manager)*

- arrives on time and stays until the end
- offers a good selection of product and enough of it to last through the market day
- their price, presentation and quality match
- professional display and presentation
- stands at their booth, smiles and initiates conversation with customers
- focuses on customer service
- is aligned with the market's vision/mission
- understands the success of the market as a whole as the key to their success
- follows the rules (parking, etc.)

Added value if the vendor also ...

- works collaboratively with other vendors
- takes advantage of training and networking opportunities
- is a market shopper
- is community-minded
- invests in the market by giving their time/expertise, etc.

*Extracted from the
Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia
Cooperative e-newsletter,
October 27, 2016.*

Craft beers, spirits now available at Alberta approved farmers' markets



L-R: Graham Sherman (Tool Shed Brewery); The Honourable Joe Ceci; Andrea Lau (Bridgeland Riverside Farmers' market); Alain Maisonneuve (AGLC); Colin McLean (Banded Peak Brewing); and Chris Heier (Half Hitch Brewing) celebrate new opportunities for Alberta's small liquor manufacturers at Alberta approved farmers' markets.

In August, the Alberta Government made it possible for craft brewers to sell their products at Alberta approved farmers' markets alongside cottage wine, already approved to be sold at these venues.

"This creates new business opportunities for entrepreneurs who are truly at the heart of this policy change," said Joe Ceci, President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance.

There are 92 liquor manufacturers in Alberta and many have expressed a desire to showcase their products at markets. Individual approved markets will determine whether to allow liquor sales at their farmers' market.

This policy change means small

businesses gain access to a new retail channel and an opportunity to widen their consumer base. And it means consumers have a new avenue to access local liquor products and an opportunity to contribute to the growing craft liquor industry.

"This is a win-win for Alberta's businesses and consumers," said Alain Maisonneuve, acting president & CEO, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC).

The licensing process has also been streamlined. All manufacturers will now have a single licence, rather than multiple ones, to identify their manufacturing facilities and their licensed establishments. ●

Three ways to increase market sales

Whether your market attracts just a few or many hundreds of people, here are three ways to convert those casual visitors into paying customers.

1. Improve your curb appeal

Just like selling a house, a prospective customer forms an initial, and sometimes indelible, impression of you and your product by the appearance of your booth.

The first and perhaps most important thing you can do is have a well-lit booth. Boost your lighting (especially during the dark winter months) and you will attract the attention of far more customers.

The second thing you can do to boost your curb appeal is to always keep your booth well-stocked and meticulously organised.

2. Build rapport

Nothing is more important than making your customers feel welcome and appreciated. The initial encounter is the most important: when a customer approaches your booth, be standing, smile, and extend a friendly greeting, then let the customer dictate the level of contact. Some people like to be waited on hand-and-foot (they'll let you know), whereas others prefer to browse privately.

After the customer has had a few seconds to look over your merchandise, pipe in with a short explanation: "By the way, these vegetables all come from our family

garden." Or "Our family makes these products from the yarn we spin from our sheep." This engages the customer in the unique, quality nature of your products – available only in a farmers' market setting.

Wear a nametag, it's an easy way to subtly start an informal relationship. Your customer can say: "Thanks for your help, Jane, I'll be back."

Get to know the names of your regular customers. This is a sure-fire way to develop loyal, repeat customers, and is another unique aspect of farmers' markets – customers become extended family.

3. Up-sell

An up-sell is a psychological strategy of getting the customer to purchase additional items beyond what he/she normally would. For example, you are a jeweller, and a customer is in the process of purchasing a pair of earrings, you might say: "Oh my, this necklace would look SO good with those earrings!" You've now just doubled or tripled your original sale.

For long-term vendors, lease a portable credit card machine. Although there is a cost, about \$80 a month plus swipe and transaction fees, the mere sight of a credit/debit machine will significantly boost sales (guaranteed!), and it won't take long for your machine to pay for itself many times over. ●

Extracted from the Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia Cooperative e-newsletter, October 27, 2016.

Upcoming Events

WORKSHOP SERIES

ESSENTIALS OF SELLING LOCAL FOOD

Tuesday, October 24, 8am-4pm
Wildwood Rec. Complex,
5530 50 St., Wildwood,
\$25/per. incl. GST & lunch

This one-day workshop is for people interested in learning more about selling food direct to consumers and potentially transitioning into retail sales. You will learn about the local food opportunity as well as the different market channels they could pursue. Register by October 17, 2017: **1-800-387-6030** or [click here](#).

GETTING INTO FARMING

Thursday, October 26, 9am-3:30pm, Airdrie Ag. Centre,
97 East Lake Ramp NE, Airdrie,
\$25/per. incl. GST & lunch

Session topics include: Overview of Agriculture; Business Planning; Personal Assessment; Financial; Land; Resources/Education. Register by October 23: call the Agriculture and Forestry Ag-Info Centre at **1-800-387-6030**.

FUN WITH FINANCING - LEARN AND NETWORK

Wednesday, October 18,
2pm-7pm, Holiday Inn Hotel
and Suites, Edmonton Airport,
1100 - 4 St., Nisku,
\$10/per. +GST, incl. snacks

Do you have burning questions about financing and aren't sure where to find the answers? Do you need money to take your agri-processing business to the next level? Hear expert speakers and network with over 30 lenders. [Click to register](#).

For more information on any of these, or future events, [click here](#) or call 1-800-387-6030.

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