



Say What you Mean and Mean Something Marketing Webinar for Direct Marketing Farmers

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Webinar Questions and Answers

1. Isn't a logo a very important way of branding and promotions? It is the visual message that will appear in front of the customers' eyes, the repetition and consistent message that should stay in the customers mind? I think logo is very important and the first thing to focus on. Am I wrong?

A logo is visual and tells your story. But the message is what grabs them. The message, if it is memorable and creates an emotional appeal for your business, then becomes one with the logo. We know a SWOOSH is Nike, but it appeals to us because we want to be associated with the sports culture. The SWOOSH keeps that feeling for us in the forefront. But a logo doesn't stand alone. It must be a part of the overall brand to be effective.

2. You talk a lot about knowing your customer to determine how to reach them. What tips can you give farmers to help them 'know' their customers or what to ask their customers to truly understand them. A lot of corporations do this via market research - farmers don't have that experience. Thoughts....

Large corporations will do the same techniques that you should – that is to just talk to your customers. Lead them with targeted questions to get at the answers you need. But you want to know what kinds of products they want, what do they need to be successful with your products, what is important to them, what do they value. You also want to know what they think about your product and what can you do to make their lives easier.

Once you get the information you need to compile it so you can remember and act on it. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) spreadsheet on Excel to track your customer information (see the webinar on CRM). This information can be logged in once you return from market. But if your questions are targeted enough to draw out the information you need, the responses will be memorable. But do keep a notebook handy to jot down key phrases to help you remember once you return home to your computer.

3. What elements would you put on an egg carton to distinguish that farm's eggs?

That's a tough one. But what about including a note in each carton with a message from the chickens. Each week would be a different message. People would keep coming back to see what the next message is. A simple slip of paper with this message, like a fortune cookie, is all it would take. But the goal is to make whatever you do memorable.

4. I like the idea of "making the farm visit a desired destination" but what about not having people/time to "entertain" folks who come?

Can you get interns to help with "entertaining" your customers? Or maybe look at people who are home through the summer, like teachers. They may be happy to spend the summer outdoors on a farm. To help make it a destination with the time and resources you have, you can do a cost/benefit analysis and determine the best use of your time and resources to make your farm a memorable experience for those who come. You can also limit the time that you have the public at your farm. Then make it memorable for them while they are there.

5. Can you provide more comments about local farms that don't go to a farmers market and depend on customers coming to farm?

It is important to create a message that touts you as a destination. What are the benefits of coming direct to your farm – freshness when you purchase it at the farm, see where your food is grown and have a better relationship with your food and farmer, etc. But make your message something that will resonate with your customers so they know that going to your farm benefits their lives.

6. Can you provide a good resource that I could use to walk me through a swot analysis?

There are many resources online. A google search will give you a lot of information about conducting a SWOT analysis.

7. I did a farmers market every week one season and developed a following because I had really fresh produce, it looked good, they knew I grew it myself. Lot of customers liked to talk to me re: my organic growing practices, etc. What was most popular were the products that took the most time to prepare to sell. The problem is that I couldn't keep up with the farm workload myself & couldn't hire anyone because I couldn't afford to.

You will need to differentiate your product from others in the market and educate your customers about those differences. This will help you to charge a higher price for those products. Again it is your message – market the benefits of buying your products. Bundle them with other products you have to make a soup bundle, or a Mexican meal bundle, etc. That gives them a higher appeal because you've answered their problem – what to make for dinner tonight. But never be afraid to charge what you need to for your products. If your quality is high and you market the benefits, people will be happy to pay your price.

8. What are the best strategies for marketing to a population that is not on the internet. What are the benefits to still having an internet presence when most of your customers are not online?

First, one of the fastest growing segments of society to utilize the internet is senior citizens. So while many of your customer may not currently be using the internet, they may be gravitating that way. But you will want to stay online to be certain you can reach those potential customers that are plugged in.

To reach non-electronic customers you will need to return to basics. For example, flyers will work well. People like to get materials to look it. Bounce back coupons are every effective in encouraging people to return to your business. Newspapers, especially community papers that focus on local news and events, is another back-to-basics option. While you can purchase ad space, maybe you can become a contributing writer. Offer a “what's new on the farm” feature with recipes. This not only promotes your business, but sets you up as an expert in your field. Another idea is to get involved with local events and organizations. Donate product for raffles, dinners, etc. That will give you a bit of PR to promote your business to their clients and customers.

9. E-mail vs Facebook. Which is better?

People react differently to each of these. Facebook is very social, meaning it is a great place to engage your customers and build relationships. You can educate your customers about your business. But customers do not respond well to advertising on social media. Instead concentrate on pictures, interesting facts about what you do or how you do it. With email, you can promote and advertise. With an enticing subject line, people will open your email and read your message. This can be especially effective if you include an electronic coupon or provide a reason, such as a calendar of events, etc, that will encourage them to read through your message and take action.