

Appendix V

Tips for successful market set-up and displays

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES MORE PROFITABLE

In January 2007 at the NOFA Vermont Direct Marketing Conference, keynote speaker, Vance Corum, author of *The New Farmers Market*, presented a whirlwind slide show of vendor displays in markets throughout the US and Europe for one of his workshops. Below is a summary of the workshop.

Vance's book, *The New Farmers Market* has a wealth of information for vendors, managers and Board of Directors alike and I encourage your market to get a copy. Vance Corum's book can be purchased through Amazon.com or through Vance Corum's website. Some may also be available at the NOFA VT office.

KEY ELEMENTS TO DOUBLE YOUR SALES:

1. Your personal enthusiasm of your product and how you present yourself. Statistics show that your body language represents 55% of how much you care about your product, your voice tone 38%, and your words 7%. Share your product, offer samples, demo your product somehow if possible.
2. Vary the heights of your display. For interest, and people see the most in an area between your waist and shoulder
3. Be careful with color...make what is next to each other pleasant to the eye...use a color wheel if necessary.
4. Good customer service. Smile, try and remember names...set goal to remember 2 more customers names each week...they often will come back just for that.
5. Product integrity. Only bring quality products
6. Abundance: always have display to look "full". If you have a 20 ft space, and as the day goes on and product thins out, take down tables and consolidate product...psychologically people don't like to buy "leftovers"
7. If at all possible, have samples
8. Be willing to change the market hours (to make longer) if the demand requires it.

DISPLAYS:

1. "45 degree waterfall effect" works well. (like we often see in big grocery stores?!) Remember "the waist to shoulder area." And if applicable, raise your table/display with PVC pipe on the legs.
2. Have variety within the display (height, colors, etc). Also, if your product changes from week to week, and once you know what is on your truck (if the night before) sit down and quickly make a diagram of booth space to see where stuff will go the next morning. This will save a lot of time in the morning when setting up.
3. Grab people's attention. ie: bring huge squash, pumpkin etc
4. Have photos of your operation, you at work, etc
5. You need to "look" like what you are. If you are a farmer, look like one and not just a distributor of vegetables and fruits.
6. Maybe a sign that says thanks for shopping with us
7. Make your display look like a work of art. Use colors of product to your advantage.
8. Good Signage; Eye catching sign very important...especially if you move around, so people can recognize you in a new space. If you have a large booth, have a couple signs saying who you are. Consider getting t-shirts or a special hat you (and your employees) wear every week to personalize yourselves. Your sign should mirror your product(s).
9. Signs within your booth: Good clear signs labeling what each product is. Signs for herbs may include what they can be used with. Have additional information on how to cook or use unusual vegetables or herbs. If possible/applicable, have sign that says price includes tax
10. If there has been any publicity ie newspaper article about you and your business be sure to have it in a poster form, framed, etc so customer can read about you
11. Provide a place for customers to set down their other goods, purses etc while they buy from you

12. If you sell things in pt and qt baskets, take them out of their flat and set ½” apart. Customers will be more apt to want to pick them up because it is easier for them to do so.
13. If you have different colors of something in small baskets, vary the baskets ie checkerboard effect. Statistics show you will sell many more!
14. Abundance (again): Always make display look as full as possible, even if mixing varieties of ie eggplants peppers at end of day to make box look fuller
15. Considering mixing fruits or vegetables that “go together” in the same container, ie different kinds of tomatoes, berries, peppers, potatoes.
16. Flower growers. Have flowers in containers that “show off” your product and situated so customer can “see” them well and choose them easily (if applicable)

OTHER MANAGEMENT IDEAS AND COMMENTS

1. Leave your “bad attitude” at home. Put on a happy and joyful face even if you don’t feel like it. Customers want to have a joyful time at the market and if you are a downer, they will go elsewhere
2. Don’t spend you time gossiping with your neighbor vendor or friend that arrives or telling them what a bad week you had. It is a real turn off to customers
3. Be sure to wear clean clothes; especially if you sell meat or cheese or other food products; that you “look clean” People want the image of clean when they buy food. If your product needs to be kept cold or hot, have your display such that customers “see” your food is being sold in the condition it should be for safety sake.
4. If you have a really busy stand, consider selling things in units and not by the pound, and have prices rounded up by the nearest dollar or 50 cents to speed things up. Include sales tax (and sign that says so)
5. If you sell light weight items, like lettuce or other small salad greens, don’t say ie \$8/lb but say \$2 for 4 oz or have bagged for a price. People can be scared off by big price
6. As alternative to mesculn mixes, and you have the space, try and let customers make their own mixes with the greens
7. Have recipes to hand out for vegetables and fruits, especially unusual ones.
8. Give samples of fruits and vegetables available and appropriate to do so
9. Consider value added products: coleslaw mix, stir-fry mix; sell broccoli florets and take stems and make broccoli slaw with cabbage. You may find you sell way more slaw than you can keep up. In case of broccoli florets and slaw, they both would be value added products.
10. Make lemonade out of lemons: If you have ie not enough red or yellow raspberries or blueberries to sell, mix them together in the same pint and charge more (for variety). If you have too many tiny potatoes, instead of selling off as seconds, put in pint container and give some catchy name like mini salad potatoes and add a recipe for potato salad.
11. Consider a 100% guarantee on what you sell
12. Produce (and food vendors?), consider doing markdowns for the last hour ie 10%-25% off. Statistics show the customer crowd changes as the day goes on...the wealthier come early, the poorer come later...This is a way to take less home and help those less fortunate to still shop at market
13. If you have a large stand, and customers always want to talk to you, consider hiring another employee so you can visit. Your sales may increase more than what it is costing you to pay the extra employee.
14. If you have to hire employees to help you, be sure they have good attitudes, are enthusiastic about your business and what you sell, as they are the “face of your product” if it’s not you. If your sales change week to week significantly, check to see who sold for you that day, and if it shows consistently a certain employee(s), consider not sending them anymore, selling to the public may not be their forte.
15. Fit children’s interest into your stand. Remember, they are the future farmers and consumers!

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DISPLAYS CREATE A LASTING IMPRESSION AT FARMERS' MARKETS

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From a manager's point of view, consider the displays at your market as the sum total how you look to the customer—the first impression. Individual vendor displays, the set-up, site and amenities make up the total market shopping experience. With that in mind, take a walk through your market with a customer you don't know and get their impressions. Or find a retail designer to walk the market and provide suggestions. As with all retailing, the quality of the shopping experience makes a big impression on customers and influences their return visit.

At an established market, the ability to change or control the appearance of your site and surroundings may be limited. However, enhancements and amenities can be added to improve the shopping atmosphere. Colorful flags, signs, balloons or beautiful planters, though they may be temporary, help draw attention and create a festive feeling. If banners and planters can be left in place when the market is not operating, this serves as a reminder of market days to come. At a minimum, the site should be clean and waste containers provided. If cleanliness of the area is a problem, bring it to the attention of public works departments. Safety may be a concern in some neighborhoods, so having police officers present, if only to manage traffic and parking, increases customer security. Seating is an amenity that is also appreciated encouraging customers to relax and stay a while.

After looking at ways to improve the appearance of the area in which the market operates, next consider the layout and how easy it is for customers to shop. Take a clipboard with a map of the market and draw a line on the map that follows a customer through the market and place an "x" on where they stop. Do this with 20-50 customers and shopping patterns emerge that illustrate bottlenecks or dead spots. The arrangement of vendors may help solve some of these problems. Anchor vendors may help draw customers through the market. Avoid placing vendors with similar products next to each other to create more equitable exposure. For example, a bread vendor offering samples next to a busy produce vendor may generate impulse sales to customers waiting on line. For most markets, a single or double linear arrangement, encourages the customer to walk from one end to the other. Avoid having too many openings that allow them to escape.

Dead spots in the market are not only caused by the placement of vendors, but are greatly influenced by the products, quality, displays and personalities of individual vendors. New vendors are often at a disadvantage over established vendors, but can establish themselves fairly quickly if they focus on presenting unique, high quality, attractively displayed products.

Successful selling at a farmers' market begins with high quality products. It is important that vendors differentiate themselves from the competition. This can be accomplished through product quality, product mix, displays, signs, enhancements and selling skills. Before a new member joins a market, they should be required to visit and discuss with the manager or board

what they feel their unique contribution will be. This is not to exclude vendors from selling similar products but to help them focus on what they have to offer the customer that is unique. Having enough volume of demand products is important but diversity increases the value and convenience of shopping at a farmers' market for the customer.

To build an effective display, a vendor needs to bring sturdy and safe selling tables or display racks. Watch for splintered wood or table legs to trip over. Display tables or stands should be clean and attractive. A table cloth can hide an ugly table and help to enhance a display. A display should be arranged within the customers view between knee to eye level, with a 30 degree slope no deeper than a customers reach. A tent is an effective way to delineate a selling stall and helps protect products from the rain or sun. Umbrellas may be colorful and attractive but are less useful in providing enough cover and are easily blown over in strong winds.

Displays are the silent salesperson at market and should communicate a vendors image and product standard, as well as attract attention and be arranged for efficient selling. Displays should appeal to the senses using color, texture, fragrance, and taste to attract customers.

Mass appeal is the minimum standard for an effective display. This can be achieved with one product or many products. The vendor with only a few products will want to keep them piled high and looking fresh. The vendor with several products will want to arrange these across the face of the display using colors and textures to visually enhance the display. A general rule is to display at least 3 larger items like cabbage or winter squash before moving to the next item; for smaller products, display 6-8 items and then move to next product. Smaller items should be closer to eye view while larger items can be lower in the display. Bulky items are effectively displayed in baskets, crates, or bags raised off the ground by at least 12-20 inches. It is important to consider the efficiency of selling when arranging a display. Avoid elaborate displays that lose their integrity as soon as one item is removed.

If a vendor only has a few products to sell, mass appeal can be created through enhancements such as tablecloths, baskets, flowers, photo albums, samples, etc. For example, meat vendors who may not be able to display their products can have farm photos, attractive signs, product information, recipes, cooked samples, etc. to attract customers. Given public concerns about food safety, it is critical for managers and vendors to adhere to all health and sanitary regulations to ensure public safety. A clean attractive display of quality products will go a long way towards gaining customer confidence.

The final strategy for successful sales at a farmers' market is to be customer-oriented. This begins with how the vendor looks—a clean shirt, apron or hat with the farm name signals professionalism and pride. Greeting customers with a friendly smile and talking to them about the products goes a long way towards personalizing the experience for the customer which is what makes markets unique from other retail food outlets.

A market manager can improve the success of farmers' market businesses by helping vendors recognize product opportunities and ways to improve displays. This contributes to the overall product selection and appearance of the market and enhances the customers shopping experience. It is the sum of the whole that creates the atmosphere which is unique to markets and which helps ensure their success.

DISPLAYS THAT SELL

The successful vendor learns how to present himself and his products to his customers in a way that:

1. attracts patrons to his stand
2. entices them to stay and browse
3. eases the purchasing process
4. enables them to become repeat customers
5. encourages them to speak favorably about your stand to others
(free advertising by word-of-mouth)

Do you do the following:

1. wear a nametag
2. post a farm sign with address and phone
3. set out business cards
4. stay at your stand
5. stay courteous, even when tired
6. display plenty of CLEAN product
7. fit table space to product amount
8. replenish products throughout the day
9. consolidate products as you sell out
10. set up so that your display is accessible to all customers
11. have a definite transaction/weighing area
12. label all products with name and price
13. make bagging materials easily available
14. post applicable licenses
15. keep the back of your area clear for ease of movement
16. make scales available to customers
17. protect your products from the elements with tenting, shade cloth
18. use an attractive, appropriate table covering
19. post what is new this week, what is here for the last time, what is coming soon
20. keep cash box out of public reach, always keep it guarded
21. wear a cash apron
22. bring a broom, trash can for neatness
23. bring a calculator, scratchpad, pens/pencils
24. bring extra markers, blank signs, tape
25. bring a first aid kit
26. have extra helpers for "big crunch" times
27. display a picture board of your farm, make maps available for visitors

Farmers Markets: Vendor Evaluation

Market:

Vendor:

Yes No Needs Improvement

Overall image

Image is favorable			
Interesting and attractive signs			
Neat and well-organized			
Vehicle doesn't detract from display			
Promotes farming image with photos etc.			
Permits and licenses displayed			

Display

Adequate space			
Space used efficiently			
Display surface is clean and smooth			
Display is accessible to customers			
Sturdy and not hazardous to workers or customers			
Logically arranged/ logical grouping of products			
Fully stocked			

Product

Fresh, high quality			
Wide variety			
Identified by name			
Attractive signs			
Non-hazardous foods			
Variety of unit sizes available			

Pricing

Clearly displayed prices			
Appropriate prices			
If sold by weight, appropriately labeled scales certified			
Taxable items identified properly			

Cash Handling

Appropriate use of calculator			
Receipts			
Cash box or other means of collecting money			
Security provisions			

Customer Service

Bags			
Recipes			
Taste testing			
Literature			
Complaint policy			

Farmers Markets: Vendor Evaluation

Personnel

Courteous			
Friendly, greet customers			
Standing to encourage sales			
Neat appearance			
Appropriately staffed			
Informed about product			

Notes: