

Developing a Marketing Plan:
A Workbook for Agritourism Operators,
Farmers' Market Vendors, and Local Food Producers

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PART 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR BUSINESS

Before you begin developing a marketing plan, it is important to first be sure the purpose and direction of your business, event, or product you are intending to market are clear. In this section, we will focus on the purpose of your business, what makes your business unique, and where you want to go as a business.

1. **Mission.** What is the mission (or purpose) of your business? A mission describes what the business does or the reason for its existence. (Example: The purpose of my business is to grow and sell produce to buyers in Central Mississippi.)
2. **Vision.** What is the vision of your business? A vision statement describes what the business aspires to be in the long term. (Example: My business seeks to be the state's leading sustainable producer of cotton.)
3. **Focus.** List below if you want to focus on marketing your entire business (full farming operation), a particular event on your farm, a community farmers' market, or a local food product/direct farm product.
4. **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis.** Next, keeping what you want to market in mind, think through the internal strengths and weaknesses associated with the business/event/product and the external opportunities and threats. In the table below, list *several* attributes that are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the business/event/product. (Example responses for a business: Strengths may include having high-quality and dedicated employees; weaknesses may include limited financial resources; opportunities may include few other businesses currently marketing products online; threats may include uncertain customer demand.)

	Helpful to achieving the goal	Harmful to achieving the goal
Internal (attributes of the business/event/ product; typically have some direct control over)	STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:
External (attributes of the environment; typically have little direct control over)	OPPORTUNITIES:	THREATS:

5. **Primary SWOT Factors.** Based on the SWOT analysis you just completed, go back to the table, and put a star next to the most important factor in each category.

6. **Competitive Advantage.** With the SWOT analysis in mind, identify at least one way that your business/event/product is unique. (Hint: Does the uniqueness relate to lowest cost in the industry, highest quality, best selection, excellent service, or something similar?) (Example: Our business has the most efficient process in the region for production, which allows us to reduce production costs.)

7. **Develop a Goal.** Based on the unique competitive advantage you listed, what is one marketing-related goal you have for your business/event/product that aligns with this uniqueness? (Examples: To increase customers by 15% by the end of the next quarter by advertising our high-quality products, or to increase the number of repeat customers by 25% by the end of next year by offering the best service.)

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARKET

The next step is to determine whom you are trying to reach when you market your product. This will answer the question: Who are your potential customers?

There are many different segments of the population that can be targeted in a marketing plan. Each segment has various demographics, tastes, preferences, desires, and ideas on how they prefer to spend their money.

- 1. Identify Market Segments.** Complete the table below to gain more insight into all the potential consumers you may reach. Answer the following questions thinking about the type of potential customers that your business/event/product is likely to attract.

Questions about potential consumers	Response
Where are they located?	
What are their ages?	
Are they primarily male or female?	
What is their average household income range?	
What is their average level of education?	
What are their average personal values?	
What type of lifestyle do they tend to have?	
What types of products do they tend to purchase?	
Is there a certain time of the year they tend to purchase your primary product?	
In what other ways can you describe your potential consumers?	

2. **Identify Target Market.** A common mistake is for businesses to try and reach all consumers with the same approach. To enhance the success of this marketing plan, we will focus on a *specific segment* of the potential consumers you identified in the previous table.

From this group of all potential consumers, **describe one specific group of consumers** you would like to target. (Example: We will target potential consumers in ZIP code 39759 who are either male or female and ages 25–50, with household incomes of \$75,000 and above and who tend to be interested in purchasing organic produce throughout the year.)

3. **Price Sensitivity of Target Market.** How price sensitive is this group of consumers you identified? Are they price sensitive (demand the lowest price for goods), or are they willing to pay more for a better-quality product (not price sensitive)?

4. **Brand Identification.** Do you currently have a brand?

If yes: What is your brand? Describe how your brand tells the story of your business and what experience you will create for a potential customer.

If no: What experiences and ideas would you want to communicate to your customers about your business and the products/and or services you offer? What is your business/product/event known for (or what do you want to be known for) that is different from your competitors?

PART 3: DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN

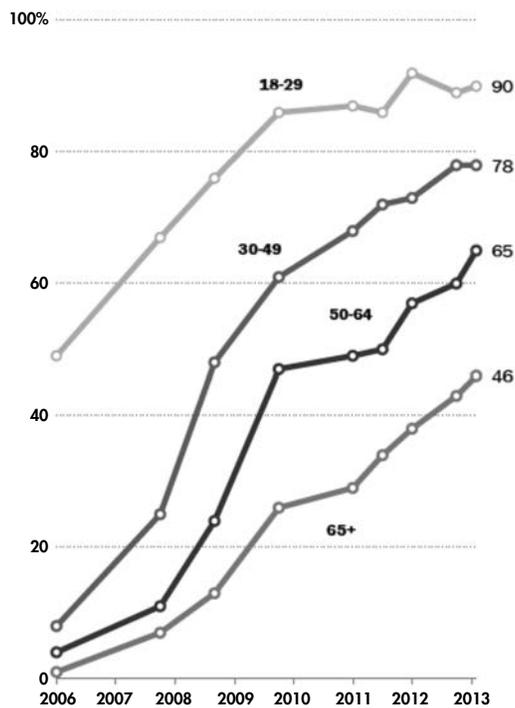
Now that you better understand the strengths of your business/product/event, have identified specific customers to target, and have thought about a brand, the next step is to develop a marketing plan for how to promote the brand of your business/product/event to your target consumers.

There are numerous ways to advertise to potential consumers. Some methods include direct marketing (direct mail, telemarketing, Internet), non-direct marketing (advertising to large numbers of consumers using billboards, radio, newspaper), sales (using a sales force and/or distributors), and public relations (advertising for the purpose of managing the public image of the business in the community).

Given the focus of this workshop is centered on using specific tools to enhance marketing efforts, the following steps will help build a marketing plan using direct marketing and public relations approaches.

Social networking site use over time, by age group

% of internet users in each age group who use social networking sites



Pew Research Center's Internet Project surveys.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

According to a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center:

- The vast majority (90%) of younger adults (18–29) use some form of social networking site, like Facebook, compared to 46% of adults 65 and over.
- Older women are more likely than older men to use social networking sites.
- Half (52%) of female Internet users ages 65+ are social networking site adopters, compared with 39% of older men.
- Some 54% of Internet users ages 65–69 use social networking sites, compared with just 27% of Internet users ages 80 and older.

1. **Social Media Marketing.** Based on the target market you identified, are these potential consumers likely to use social media based on their age?

Part A. Check which of the following may be the most appropriate social media platforms for promoting your business/event/product:

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Tumblr

LinkedIn

Foursquare

LiveJournal

Other: _____

Part B. What is the status of your website? How can it be (further) developed to enhance your online presence and reach the targeted consumers?

Part C. What emerging tourism technology trends may help you brand and market your business? Write at least one short-term and one long-term goal for each strategy.

a. Targeted Technology Strategies

b. Tourism Trend Sites Strategy

c. Virtual Tourism Strategy

2. **Relationship Marketing.** In addition to social media marketing, relationship marketing (or word-of-mouth advertising) can be a valuable tool to promote your business/event/product.

Relationships are built through interactions that you and your employees have with outside individuals and organizations. Relationships can be built by creating a positive experience for the customer, promoter, and/or partner. Those who have a positive experience will be more likely to be return customers or to refer your facility to someone else.

List below at least two relationships to build or strengthen over the next year.

- Build/Strengthen a relationship with...

- Build/Strengthen a relationship with...

3. **Public Relations Marketing.** Public relations marketing consists of efforts to establish or maintain the public image of the business/event/product. Answer the following questions thinking of the public's perception:

a. How does your business/event/product benefit the community?

b. How does your business/event/product improve the tourism mix of your region?

c. How does your business/event/product contribute to agriculture?

d. What is the overall perception of your business/event/product by the public?

e. How can the overall perception of your business/event/product be improved?

Part B. Next, replicate the steps in Part A to develop at least two more goals in addition to the goal developed in the previous section. List your specific goals in this table.

Deadline				
Goal				
Message				
How to Reach Target Market				
Target Market				
Unique Feature				

Tips for Relationship Marketing

1. Consider who would benefit from your facility's success.
2. Create a list of local businesses.
3. Create a list of civic organizations.
4. Create a list of promoters.
5. Set up meetings with current attractions in the area.
6. Make a list of all current attractions in the area, and offer to display their promotional material.
7. Determine all media outlets in the region, including newspapers, magazines, newsletters for special interest groups like the local garden club or civic organizations.
8. Send a free pass to an event to members of the media.
9. Invite local hotel staff to tour the facility or offer to host a free lunch meeting for the rotary club.
10. Determine potential businesses that could benefit from an increase in events in your facility.

Customer Service Checklist

1. Be accessible. All staff phone numbers and email addresses should be posted clearly online. At least one contact phone number and email address should be placed on all promotional material.
2. Answer or return phone calls promptly.
3. Post a schedule of events online and make it easily accessible to all staff to avoid confusion.
4. Post a list of facility rules online and on facility property.
5. Post clear signage indicating parking, exits, restrooms, offices, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and facility contact information.
6. Always answer questions to the best of your ability and in a friendly manner.
7. Maintain a clean, safe facility.
8. Make sure that you and all staff are familiar with your community.
9. Be able to give directions to hotels, restaurants, hospital, gas stations, ATMs, and other relevant locations visitors might need.
10. Maintain a stand of brochures of local businesses and other area attractions in your facility.
11. Keep restrooms clean.
12. Write a mission statement for your facility and familiarize staff with this mission.
13. Have a positive attitude about your facility and your community.
14. Be able to answer questions about your community, such as: What is the typical temperature and weather? How do I get to main roads? Where is the Internet accessible? Where are area attractions? Who are the elected officials? What is your community known for? What are some interesting characteristics about your town?



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