

Building Coalitions: The Key to Developing Markets

Lunch & Learn
for Young Specialty Crop Growers

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PennState Extension

Who is this guy?



Growing Markets

- The challenges associated with developing markets are not unique to agriculture.
- However, the development of new markets in this sector represents one of the greatest challenges for emerging farmers.

Marketing

- Marketing is best described as satisfying the customer at a profit or in other words,
 - It is the art of getting the customer to come to the product.
- When done right, it identifies strategies to:
 - Meet customer needs to gain their loyalty
 - Explains the benefits of your products
 - Establishes your brand

The Essence of Marketing

- Product – should meet the needs or create a customer need
- Place – identifies where customers can get it
- Price – communicates value
 - Has to be low enough so the customers will buy it but high enough for you to make a profit
- Promotion – consists of advertising, publicity, and promotional items

Current Markets

- What are your current markets?
- How do you know?
- Have you tapped out the potential of your market?
- What do your customers want?

Performing Research

- Listen to the consumer
- Tangible market demographics
- Types of market research
 - Surveys – ask your customers
 - General research – who buys what?
 - Statistical research – how much to people buy?
 - Industry research – what are the emerging markets?
- Your research method is important

My Piece of Paradise



New Markets

- What strategies have you used for developing new markets?
- How do you decide what to grow?
- Do you ask your consumers?
 - The case of the Somali bitter melon
 - Small footprint, large return

Challenges of Developing New Markets

- What are some of the challenges of developing new markets?
- How do you know what is working?
- Challenges of time and resources

Collective Market Development

- Have you worked together as a group to collectively develop new markets?
- Learning as a group
 - Vicarious learning
- Benefits of evaluation
 - Not just knowing what works but why
 - Enables more effective planning



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Building Coalitions

Coalitions

- A local coalition is defined as a group whose primary purpose is to develop the local resources requisite to initiating, promoting, and sustaining development efforts.
- It capitalizes on the resources and networks of coalition partners.

Coalitions

- In any community/region, there are individuals and entities that are effective in starting, sustaining, and stopping development projects.
- Understanding who those entities are is critical for building a successful local coalition. These entities often represent government, business, and civic organizations.

Coalitions

- Develops a list of contacts and potential partners to participate in the local coalition.
- Identify key leaders
 - Starters, sustainers, stoppers
- Identify key groups
 - Government, business, civic organizations
- Brainstorming

Coalitions

- Makes use of available assets
- Connects assets to address issues identified
- Uses external resources to augment or supplement rather than drive any initiative
- Determines courses of action bases on a nested model for development

Uses of Coalitions

- Engages community-based leaders in determining what they are willing to support
- Utilizes local efforts and resources
- Enables local decision making, empowerment, and sustainability
 - HAFA
 - MEGA

HAFA

- Hmong American Farmers Association
- Established in 2011
- Created because “the best people to support Hmong farmers are Hmong farmers themselves.”
- Aggregates and sells members’ produce through CSA shares, schools, retailers and institutions.
- <https://www.hmongfarmers.com/story/>

HAFA



HAFA

- Among farmers had challenges common among new farmers including access to land, training, equipment, capital, and markets.
- They use a holistic approach to work with new farmers.
 - Land access, new markets, trainings and capacity building, financing, and research and data collection.

HAFA

- Alternative market identification
 - Beyond farmers markets
 - Works to establish distribution opportunities with institutions, wholesalers, and direct to consumers
- Business development
 - Helps farmers create business plans, crop plans, and management practices

HAFA

- Research
 - Teamed up with the University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Fruits and Vegetable Growers Association, the MN Dept. of Agriculture, and the MN State College and Universities system.
 - Longitudinal research
 - Growing practices
 - Soil fertility



HAFA

- Trainings
 - Works with a variety of partners to offer additional trainings to farmers
 - Begun to extend offerings to Somali, Latinx, and other immigrant farmers
 - Emerging Farmer Conference



MEGA

- Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture (MEGA) – a lesson in the power of one determined individual
 - Founded in 1999
 - Mission is to improve the economic and health conditions of the MS Delta through increased education and resources
 - Based in Shelby, MS
 - Started because there was not a farmer's market in 50 miles

MEGA



MEGA

- Serves the community
 - Majority of the region are poor
 - The MS Delta has the highest rate of persistent poverty and food insecurity in the United States
 - Designed to supply low-income families with a weekly CSA share at 40% of its normal cost
 - Brought together backyard gardeners to get involved in growing their own food

MEGA

- Focused training
 - Worked with limited-resource growers
 - Taught them how to grow and what to grow
 - Conducted workshops
 - Conducted evaluation of what worked and why
 - Built bridges in communities



MEGA

- Created outlets
 - Farmers markets
 - CSAs
 - USDA partnership
 - EBT certifications
 - Expanded trainings
 - Health education
 - Youth leadership
 - Small business development

Shelby Farmer's Market

1505 Broadway St.
Shelby, MS 38774

Opened June 17, 2017

Time: Wednesdays 4:00-6:00pm

Saturdays 7:00- 1:00pm



We WELCOME **SNAP/EBT** Customers

MEGA

- Built partnerships with diverse groups
 - MS Sweet Potato Growers Association
 - Delta Fresh Foods Initiative
 - Growing Power
 - Mississippi Farm to School Network

- “It didn’t matter who got or who gets the credit. We’re changing lives.”

Takeaways

- People matter
- Discover your market
- Listen to your market
- Conduct evaluation
- Learn from the best...and the worst
- Collect partners
- Build capacity



Questions?

Thanks!

Brent Hales

323 Agricultural Administration Building

University Park, PA 16802

BrentHales@psu.edu

Office – 814-865-4028

Cell – 601-467-1280