Building Coalitions: The Key to Developing Markets

Lunch & Learn for Young Specialty Crop Growers

January 28, 2020
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,
  o It is the art of getting the customer to come to the product.

• When done right, it identifies strategies to:
  o Meet customer needs to gain their loyalty
  o Explains the benefits of your products
  o 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
  o 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
  o Surveys – ask your customers
  o General research – who buys what?
  o Statistical research – how much to people buy?
  o 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
  o Vicarious learning

• Benefits of evaluation
  o Not just knowing what works but why
  o Enables more effective planning
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
  o Starters, sustainers, stoppers
• Identify key groups
  o 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
  o HAFA
  o 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/](https://www.hmongfarmers.com/story/)
HAFA

• Hmong 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.
  o Land access, new markets, trainings and capacity building, financing, and research and data collection.
HAFA

• Alternative market identification
  o Beyond farmers markets
  o Works to establish distribution opportunities with institutions, wholesalers, and direct to consumers

• Business development
  o Helps farmers create business plans, crop plans, and management practices
HAFA

• Research
  o 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.
  o Longitudinal research
  o Growing practices
  o Soil fertility
HAFA

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

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

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

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

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

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

  o “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