

Direct Marketing Means

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Also, the customer must be treated with respect, friendliness — he is not an inconvenience, he is more important to the farmer-marketer than the other way around.

Dr. Patrick Kirschling, associate professor of food marketing and department chair at St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, was the keynote speaker, telling the audience to step off the main path, to start thinking on broader terms about what is possible in marketing their goods to the public.

Using symbolic phrases such as, "Go outside the box. Step outside the lines. Hey, get in your offroad vehicle and get outside the boundaries," Kirschling told the audience to open up their minds to direct marketing.

He said that the slightly different approach, the little bit extra service, can make all the difference between success and failure in attracting customers.

He also said not to restrict thinking to geographic areas. Direct mail order farm businesses are a possibility. He said that reading is important and to not eliminate any possibility.

However, the person contemplating change or starting a direct market should be very much aware of their capabilities, and should understand the customers.

For example, location of the market should be with the customer in mind, not to the personal desires of the farmer-owner.

Also stressed was quality, and customer satisfaction.

According to Kirschling, "96 percent of the customers who had a bad experience fail to report it" to the market owner.

However, 91 percent of those who had a bad experience won't come back if the problem is not addressed within 48 hours, he said.

And furthermore, On the average, those 91 percent tell from nine to 10 friends about the problems they experienced at the market.

On the other hand, he said that, if there were 100 customers and 95 percent of the people were satisfied with service, that doesn't mean a lot of people will know about it, he said.

According to Kirschling, this is

because people don't tend to talk about experiences which go smoothly or even better than expected, for two reasons.

If they had a good experience, those customers apparently aren't willing to share the information for fear of having it destroyed from overuse.

Also, those memories aren't as apt to come out in friendly conversation as is one concerning poor treatment.

He said that, of those 95 percent who had a good experience, at best they tell one person. If 5 percent of the customers had a bad experience, and they tell 20 people, there's actually more people hearing bad things about the market than hear good things about it.

Kirschling said there is much more detail to follow in looking at marketing, however, he said he wanted the audience to take the blinders off, and to think about five things.

He said that in any marketing organization there must be a plan, a theme which can be expressed in a sentence, about the market and that there must be a solid commitment from the top of the organization, family or strict business organization, to support that.

A vision must be outlined and communicated to everyone involved in the market, including the labor. He said they should know what kind of experience the business is trying to sell to the public.

Customer research has to be more than guessing. It should take a lot of consideration and work, surveys if necessary, but the research has to be meaningful and serious.

For running the operation, there has to be training and rewards for employees of the market.

And after all of this there has to be follow-through, which in effect means again, commitment.

The panel that followed was comprised of owner-operators of three farm markets ranging in size from small to large. They were selected because of their successes and variety of operation.

Sitting on the panel was Stanley Nehrbus, of Sabrhen Farm, in Bally, representing a small operation; David Conover of Blossom Hill Farm, Cranbury, N.J., repre-

senting a medium sized farm market; and Ronald Rohrbach of Rohrbach Farm Market, considered a large operation.

While each panelist represented a different type of angle, they were all consistent in that they said that identifying customer types, categorizing, and seeking to provide them with an experience tailored for them is the way to get and keep customers.

From that standpoint, all provide some form of entertainment with their operation.

Nehrbus said that sometimes they start up a tractor and have it moving around a little, or making noise, which seems to draw more people to the two roadside stands they operate along Rt. 100. He said they also will turn on the overhead irrigation system once in a while, just to break up the monotony for customers.

Conover said that his operation performs surveys and it seeks direct customer advice on the operation. They've changed business hours and similar aspects to be more kind to the customer.

He also warned about ever laughing at a customer, such as people wanting to pick peaches in November.

All agreed that customer education is key to improving relationships.

Rohrbach's farm-store operation offers a wide variety of items. He knows the populations of the

urban centers which house his customers, he also knows the roads and distances from those centers to his operation. He has a variety of products to provide a variety of needs.

He also has a fall apple festival which attracts from more than 7,000 people per day. This, he gave as an example of providing entertainment.

Eastern Milk Awards Scholarships

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative Association recently awarded scholarships to 15 students. To provide financial help for their post-secondary education, the \$500 scholarship will be awarded by their district director.

Applicants had to be a family member of an Eastern producer or employee. Selection of the winners was made by a committee consisting of three board members, the Young Cooperator president and one member of management.

Scholarship recipients are as follows: Wanda Derr, Cogan Station, PA; Thomas Farley, Allenwood, PA; Shelly Harshbarger, Mifflintown, PA; Lori Houser, Woodward, PA; Jason Lewis, Towanda, PA; Travis Moser, Barto, PA; Jan Saunders, Gillett, PA; James Woodmansee Jr., Lake Como, PA; Jeffrey Ainslie, Hartwick, NY; James Barnes, Clyde NY; Paula Cosen, Oxford, NY; Alicia Korona, Amsterdam, NY; Colleen Helenek, Orleans, VT; Johnathon Reed, Fairfield, VT.

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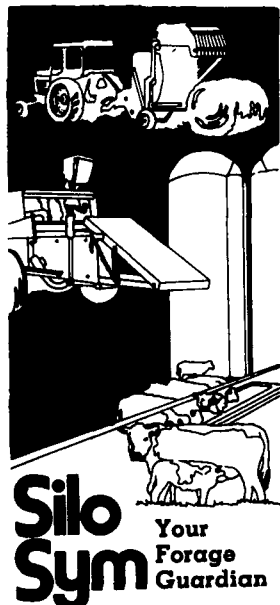


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