

Tune Up Your Produce Marketing



Good marketing is the process of fulfilling the objectives of both the buyer and the seller. The factors you have some control over are the 4 Ps of product, price, placement and promotion. Here are some tips to help you tune up your produce marketing plan.

- 1) Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why and how.
 - a. Who are your customers? Define the demographics. Focus on them.
 - b. What will entice them to buy from you?
 - c. When is your product needed?
 - d. Where will your products end up serving your consumer, or where will they be purchased?
 - e. Why should consumers buy from you?
 - f. How can you better understand what buyers expect of your product? Listen to their gripes and needs.

If you can identify consumer needs, preferences and wants, you are well on your way to success.

- 2) Grade out to two or three grades, and price appropriately. Your price will depend on
 - a. competitors' prices
 - b. production costs
 - c. placement needs; where must I sell these?
 - d. promotional needs and the cost of communicating about your produce
- 3) Distinguish your product with labels and attractive displays for strong “brand recognition.” Think quality.
- 4) Store and display fruit properly.
 - a. Hold mature green and unripe tomatoes at 55 degrees to 70 degrees F, never below 43 degrees F.
 - b. Hold ripe fruit at 46-50 degrees F (two weeks maximum).
 - c. Keep ready-to-use ripe fruit at 60 degrees F or higher.
- 5) USDA has six major color/ripeness levels; identify fruit properly. See *Guide to Tastier Tomatoes* www.floridatomatoes.org/guide.html.
- 6) Harvest at “turning” stage if splitting or environmental stress is imminent.

- 7) Make up bags of produce to sell; consumers buy more than if sold separately.
- 8) Promote the locally grown, neighborhood aspects.
- 9) Offer number three quality as 'home grown' for better acceptance.
- 10) Guarantee your fruit if you are getting top dollar for first quality. It keeps up your good name and strong branding.
- 11) Understand the competition.
 - a. Visit other markets to analyze the competition.
 - b. List your strengths and weaknesses, then list theirs; did they leave room for opportunity?
- 12) Hire pleasant people for jobs that involve direct public and buyer contact.
- 13) Improve first impressions with top quality, attractive signs.
- 14) Look into promotional assistance from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and advertising businesses.
- 15) Assess your uncontrollable influences:
 - a. the economy
 - b. government regulations
 - c. technological options – just how things are done
 - d. consumers' values and beliefs about ecological and health concerns related to your produce or production practices.
- 16) Create a simple and informative Web site. Work it to promote sales, interest and name recognition. Marketing strives to create value in the eyes of the customer, and your customer is the key to your marketing plan. When customers perceive that value exceeds price, they will buy.
- 17) You may enroll in an online course in marketing and various business topics at the www.pbs.org/als/quisic Web site.

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