



Low Cost Marketing and Promotion

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While most farmers' markets do some sort of promotion, many do not take the time to develop a promotion strategy. A strategy should be geared toward your target population, including those you would like to have in your market, but are not presently there. The most important thing to remember is: **KEEP ON MARKETING!** Having one special event at the market's anniversary is not enough. Develop an annual promotional plan where you try something different **EACH MONTH**. Here are some areas to consider:

Give "community flooding" a try. In this approach, every place you can think of is given fliers or posters to promote the market. The only limit is your time and imagination. Possible locations include: garden nurseries, health clubs, local businesses, day-care centres, and any other appropriate place.

Make your market distinct. Work on long-term image development by choosing a logo and using it on everything you create. Develop a Frequent Shopper program, or advertise a money-back guarantee on all purchases. Develop a monthly consumer update or newsletter with market information and recipes. Persuade customers that they want to return to your market.

Work with farmers to improve their merchandising techniques. This will benefit both farmers and consumers - farmers will increase their sales and consumers will enjoy their shopping experience.

Write for local publications on topics related to farmer' markets. A column on What's In Season can be a big hit. An introductory article about the market could be inserted in every church bulletin in town, or in every community group newsletter.

Involve the community in what you do. Think of promotion as integrating the market into the community. Have school children perform at the market, or invite the local library to have a book sale at the market. Reserve one spot each week for a non-profit organization. Invite the local fire department to a chili cook off or a pancake breakfast.

Become the media spokesperson for farmers' markets. Develop good working relationships with the media. Farmers' markets are of interest to food editors, community events people, business/agriculture editors, and they make great feature stories. Find out what press people are interested in and keep them in the loop. Be helpful even if it may not directly benefit your market - developing the relationship is the key to long-term media coverage.

Cross-market with local businesses. Have a scavenger hunt where customers find necessary items in nearby stores. Invite one merchant a week to participate in the market. This could be repairing shoes, giving a haircut, or giving a short class on "How to Deal with Auto Repair People". Invite local restaurants to cook at the market. Speak at the local Chamber of Commerce member meeting (and don't forget to become a member) about the happenings at the market and how they can benefit.

Work regionally with other farmers' markets. Advertising which is expensive for one market becomes affordable with a number of markets. Refer farmers to other nearby markets when you are unable to include them in yours. Develop brochures listing all regional markets for citywide distribution.



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Have agriculture education events at your market. Give consumers a quiz about agriculture in your area and award a \$25.00 market gift certificate to the winner. Invite nutritionists to help prepare fresh fruits and vegetables and learn about their health benefits. Feature a "Farmer of the Month" with pictures and information about their farm and farming practices.

Use special events to thank your customers and attract new ones. Celebrate spring with a strawberry shortcake give-away. Give each mother a free carnation on Mother's Day, raffle off a turkey and all the trimmings from the market for Thanksgiving, have a pie bake-off which is judged by local politicians or media folks. Give away melon slices during "Melon Mania", or grapes in "The Grape Escape".