

2 - MARKETING YOUR EVENT

by Ellie Winslow (2007 AEA convention speaker)

In 2010 National Agriculture Day was March 20th; in 2011 it was March 15th. June is National Dairy Month... every year. There is a National day of the horse (look it up). There is a year of the goat in the Chinese calendar. A year of the Pig.

These are just some examples of "excuses" to have events at your farm, <http://www.epromos.com/education/calendars/> . Look at this website to find other "excuses" to get an event going that could bring you customers for whatever you have to promote and sell.

What did you do last year to attract potential customers to your farm? What will you do this year to celebrate national days, weeks or months that could have great significance for your farm?

Here's the second half of the article on putting on events! Now start planning! And remember to keep records of what you do and how it goes!

How to promote this event and your farm

In order to let the world know you're having this great event, you have to advertise. Before we talk about places to put your advertising, let's talk about what makes it effective advertising. **Marketing's First Principle!**

I know, you're proud of your farm and your animals. You love to talk about them because that's human nature. The most interesting person in the world to you — is you! Totally normal. But the most interesting person in the world to your potential customer — is himself. If you want him as a customer you have to appeal to his self-interest. That means that in order to market well (so you get customers) you have to quit talking about yourself and your stuff.

Normally people advertise "I have this totally cool goat (sheep, alpaca, horse) for sale!" Who is that about? It's about the seller. To attract a customer, you have to talk about what him and what he wants, what he's dreaming about, what he hopes for, those intangible feelings he wants to have when he owns your animal or product. Maybe he hopes to have security in his retirement or a wonderful family experience or she wants to create beautiful fiber art, or they need peace of mind away from the rat race, or better nutrition for their children...or many other things. Your job is to figure out what they hope for and talk to them about how they will have that when they own one of your animals or products.

How do you figure out what they want? Well, who is the customer you want to reach? The one who wants the secure retirement, or the family experience or better nutrition? Then you write your ad — and especially the headline — with him in mind. "Imagine yourself in this new kind of Stock & Bond experience. Get peace of mind and retirement income to boot with this totally cool lifestyle." Now it's about the customer.

See, *you* showed up in that information, but the customer came first — your stuff is at the end. When you can do that successfully in all your marketing materials, they'll catch customers! This is also known as the difference between the features (facts) and the benefits (why the facts matter). All three of my marketing books cover this first principle in depth because it's the most critical piece of marketing and it results in sales. And it's the piece most often forgotten!

Once you have well-written ads and marketing materials, where are you going to put them? Be broad in your thinking about where to put ads. Put them in local newspapers if you have them — both display and classified if your budget allows. But think creatively, too. Do you have a nickel-saver-type free newspaper? They're read by many and advertising rates are usually pretty reasonable. Does your area have a community radio listing? Public service spot for TV? Are you a member of any email lists that allow announcements or ads? They are free advertising for those that allow it and good ads can get you lots of attention!

Create a flyer and post it where ever you do business (get permission of course). Ask at the Vet's office, the feed store, the library, schools, your doctor and dentist, and anywhere else they will allow it. Put posters or flyers on community bulletin boards and in general where ever it's allowed around your community. Give a presentation at Rotary or Lions. It's a community event so let the community know.

Have you ever written a press release? Most are **so** boring. Make it interesting with a great customer centered headline and make the body of the press release story-like. "Marketing Farm Products" gives information on writing attention-getting press releases. Then send it to local papers, online publishers and local newsletters that reach lot of people.

You've planned a great event that will entertain and delight a lot of people. Getting the word out is the rest of the planning story.

The day of the event

All that planning pays off! Here they come, and they'll have a great time! Here are a few more ideas for making it pay off for you.

- Have a sign in book or a drawing so they have to give you contact information. You absolutely must get names and addresses, phones and emails! The drawing can be a biggie or something little that most everyone gets... you decide, but the point is to increase their excitement and give you contact info.
- After all the fun, what will they go home with besides the memories? Your business card and herd brochure are musts. Can you create a story about kids and goats. sheep or whatever you raise? A booklet about their care or productiveness? They need to have reminders. One of the things I think is very memorable is a sample of whatever your animal produces. Perhaps you can staple or glue a yarn sample to your business card. Attach a raw fiber sample to your herd brochure. Wrap a small sample of cheese or goat jerky. I have a tiny stuffed alpaca I got as a favor from a workshop I did. Maybe you have some more business-oriented handouts (spreadsheets or information pages.) Whatever you decide, they **MUST** go home with reminders! the more fun it is, the better!
- Practice the art of chit chat. If you "invite" people to talk about themselves, they'll tell you how to market to them. Ask open ended questions, like "Tell me about your farm (goals, family, business, what you want to accomplish...)" Or "I'd love to hear what you think about..." Get them talking about themselves. There's plenty of time to answer questions after you know more about them.
- For those who you think might become customers, a follow up phone call is a great contact strategy. "I just wanted to let you know it was fun to meet you, and I thought of some other information you might like to have." And send it to them.

- And finally, plan more follow up with these contacts. Not all of them will be future customers, but some of them will and even the ones who don't become customers might tell someone who does. When I am doing this I'd have a copy of Dan Coulter's article (Ten Commandments for New Livestock Breeders) to email or snail mail to these people with an invitation to attend a free seminar at my farm. Tell them you're going to cover the Ten Commandments and other info in more detail. (This article shows up in my blog, books and on Alpaca Street website.

Remember... it's **not** about you. Make it about the customers and plan your marketing event so that it's miraculous — new customers for you and your industry!

(Ellie Winslow is retired now. She taught marketing seminars all across the US and is the author of "Marketing Farm Products," "Growing Your Rural Business," and "Economy Proofing Rural Business,"