

Summary of Webinar #1:  
**The Strategy: Identifying, reaching & connecting with  
YOUR agritourism customers**

Speakers:

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***Identifying, Reaching and Connecting with your Agritourism Customers***

Speakers: Anna Farrell and Kristen Staggs, Farrell Design Group

**Overview**

1. Identify your customer types.
2. Create your brand.
3. Get your customers' attention.
4. Create emotional, long-lasting connections with customers.

**1. Identify your customer types.**

- Taking the time to hone in on your specific customers helps more than you think!
- It allows you to focus your marketing dollars where they will result in the most customers.
- Typically, there is a primary “standard” customer type, and then one or two sub-types you should target in your social media campaigns.
  - E.g., A CSA may think their customer is “everyone who eats,” but in reality, it can be broken down further to really target your customers:
    - Busy families with kids in the house
    - Who can afford their service
    - Who want to eat organic
    - Who actually cook 4-5x/week
  - One of their client CSA's primary customer type ended up being “Busy families that buy organic, where mom or dad like to cook,” and their sub-type of customers were “Married vegetarians/vegans who don't like close to restaurants or stores that cater to their diets.”
- At least 1x/year, go through the exercise of jotting down your different customer profiles. This allows you to evolve your strategy with the changing market and trends.  
For each customer type, list:
  - Age
  - Gender

- Education
- Income
- Marital/family status
- Location
- Personality
- Lifestyle
- Opinions
- Activities & interests
- Attitudes & beliefs
- Some of the data above is demographic, and some is psychographic:
  - Demographic explains WHO your buyer is:
    - Age, Gender, Education, Income, Marital/family status, location
  - Psychographic explains WHY they buy
    - Personality, Lifestyle, Opinions, Activities & interests, Attitudes & beliefs
- Plus, there is some common customer data for agritourists. They all seek/admire:
  - Unique rural experiences
  - Authentic experiences
  - Preservation of farms
  - Deeper connections with where their food comes from than a grocery store
  - Rural ways of life
  - Getting away from the city
  - Rural landscapes and wildlife

## 2. Create your brand.

- Before you do outreach, make sure your brand is ready!
- The most important thing is that your brand is consistent across all mediums and products:
  - Visual brand: your first impression and foundation for success
    - Logo
    - Business cards
    - Website
    - Packaging (if applicable)
    - Outdoor signage
    - Handouts
    - Facebook page
    - Other social media sites
  - Attitude and tone of your online presences
  - Attitude and tone of your staff
- You should invest in training all your staff to communicate consistently, whether answering phones, welcoming guests, saying “thank you,” saying “good-bye,” etc. It’s the foundation of customer connections.

### 3. Get your customers' attention.

- The best way to engage and understand potential customers is to simply talk to your target customer types:
  - Where are they looking for your product or service?
  - Are they finding you?
  - Where do they buy from you?
  - How often do they buy?
  - What do they think of your brand?
- Face-to-face feedback is invaluable! Leads to “a-ha” moments and should drive your marketing strategy.
  - Ask if they'd mind spending a few minutes to provide feedback.
  - You can provide a small gift in return.
- Another way to reach customers is through your products.
  - Identify what your “gateway product” is (the one product that everyone gravitates toward and buys), create a story around it, and promote and offer it everywhere! You then become identified with his popular, crowd-pleasing brand.
  - Identify where most of your product sells (e.g., farmers market) and debut all your new products there.
  - If you have a lot of repeat purchases of a product, create a Frequent Buyer Card.
- Market collaboratively with other local food chain or community players.
  - For example: At an event, you could donate/highlight your locally produced meat and then have a local dairy donate/highlight their locally produced cheese. Each producer and the event host would bring in their own group of customers and expand everyone's customer base in the process.
  - Another example: Dogwood Cellars played on the name to donate a portion of proceeds of an event to the local dog shelter to attract people who were into their Dogwood wine as well as dogs in general.
- Other misc. ideas:
  - Get product into local retail outlets.
  - Run a Facebook promotion.
  - Sell via your website.
  - Offer your venue for a party to create awareness.
  - Contact schools if your service can accommodate student field trips.
  - Throw a party/event just for the press/media.
  - Give your info to local school districts to attract kids and then their parents.
  - → Always have a link back to your website, and offer printed marketing materials at events.

### 4. Create emotional, long-lasting connections with customers.

- First, establish a budget for the year before you start!
- Define your marketing strategy(ies) based on the steps above.

- Word-of-mouth is the most effective and inexpensive way to promote agritourism ventures, but it's dependent on customer satisfaction.
- If you use a marketing or other third-party vendor, make sure to get at least three references.
- Methods of connecting:
  - Visual brand: Should be appealing and appropriate so no confusion
  - Product/Service: Food that tastes good, is fun and enjoyable to eat
  - Emotional: Bring in the personal story of your agritourism business
    - Nature
    - Preservation of farmland
    - Family recipes
    - Romantic aspect of animal welfare (social media loves animal stories)
  - Customer service:
    - Needs to SHINE! – word-of-mouth
    - Always follow-up with visitors/customers
    - You can become go-to-resource for your local area for complementary businesses like accommodation, restaurants, attractions, etc.

### ***Frog Hollow Marketing Strategy***

Speaker: Al Courchesne, Frog Hollow Farm

#### **History**

- 40 years ago, realized demand for quality, local produce was booming, so first strategy was to go organic.
- First, just had U-Pick and Farm Stand
  - Easy, no experience needed
  - But, customers wouldn't pay much
  - Wanted to access more customers and have more control of customer experience
- Now:
  - Retail stores
  - Farmers market
  - CSA
  - Mail order
  - Retail storefront/café

#### **Retail stores**

- Focus: Direct marketing, no middlemen (some distributors) – more profitable than U-Pick.
- Bay Area advantage: Very close proximity to customers.
- 1<sup>st</sup> wholesale customer: Bought whole lot based on quality.

- Key: Quality, Branding, Packaging, Delivery.
- Totally relationship-based; restaurants would highlight farm name which helped build brand even more.

### **Farmers Markets**

- Early player in farmers market movement: Enabled face-to-face relationships in each neighborhood.
- Sold ripe fruit: Too ripe for wholesale/retail stores; great for sampling and selling right away.
- Careful handling: Ripe fruit required extremely careful handling; required solid training of pickers, packers and sellers about handling as well as customer engagement and support. Had to understand how things were produced, all about the farm, everything!

### **CSA**

- Invested customers.
- Outreach via fruit tastings, community events.
- Convenient pick-up for customers.
- Farmers market-grade fruit = better than grocery stores.
- Weekly newsletter in box and emails to educate on:
  - How things are grown
  - Team
  - Weather
  - “Making of food”
- Maximum customer engagement
  - Give experience of farm itself = value of food, able to teach kids
  - 2x/year U-Pick, Blossom Festival in early Spring

### **Mail Order**

- Created Frog Hollow brand for mail order over 20 years ago.
- Hired new director = greatly impacted sales
  - Requires skilled touch
  - Social media, blogs, emails, Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
  - On-farm videos, etc. also effective
  - Ads = less cost-efficient; less effort but not as effective as above

### **Farm-to-Table Café**

- Crown jewel of marketing
  - At high-traffic SF Ferry Building
  - Allows reach to foodies, food professionals, chefs, writers
  - Can test new products and get feedback
- On-Farm Kitchen produces wide variety of value-added products, pastries, etc.
- Each new building set up leads to an even stronger brand.

## Agritourism

- Sponsor and conduct monthly farm tours, but don't promote them; simply satisfying demand of people wanting to come
    - Schools/colleges
    - Recreational tours
  - Fundraisers
    - E.g., Greenbelt Alliance fundraiser; Frog Hollow donated fruit, dinners, farm experiences
  - Corporate events
    - E.g., Whole Foods team-building or to educate their buyers
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## Question & Answer Section

### Questions for Al Courchesne

#### ***How do you promote your special events like the Blossom Festival, etc?***

We do a lot on social media. Send email to CSA members. Create flyers that are taken to 11-12 farmers markets through the week in NorCal. And at our shop at the ferry building, where we serve literally hundreds of customers so it's a great place to put signage and flyers. Train your staff so they can talk about special events and explain to interested customers all the details and why it could be valuable to them.

Direct contact is so much more effective than printed advertising.

#### ***When people come to the farm stand, what kind of literature should we have for customers?***

Explanations of how you're growing your product, what your organic methods are in detail (pests, disease, etc.), specifics on different varieties, INFORMATION about food. That's what they're looking for.

#### ***For your promotional literature at your farmers market stall, what format is it? A brochure? A flyer? Do you include a QR code?***

We take postcards, trifolds and occasionally flyers to farmer's markets. We used QR codes in the past, but we haven't found them to be a very effective conversion tool from print to web.

### Questions for Anna Farrell and Kristen Staggs

#### ***How can I use social media to get more traffic to our website or should we focus more on Facebook page and just put more info there?***

Put effort into both, but Facebook is where you'll be posting a lot more frequently than on your website. You can post something on Facebook and then have links to the website for more details or event info, etc. Keep content updated on both, and then drive them to your website to convert them to buy from you.

***75% of our visitors are foreign. How to market to these folks?***

Make sure your website is responsive for desktop computers as well as smart phones. And make sure it's Google Translate-friendly. Put those buttons at top of your website. Make sure you have lots of pictures of foreign visitors at your farm, and have testimonials in their native languages, so your website immediately comes across as a hospitable place for foreign visitors so they feel comfortable making that purchase or booking. If advertising or sponsoring posts on Facebook, you can drill down to target to specific demographics and countries to then drive them to specific pages.

***When does it make sense to hire an outside consultant or contractor to help with marketing?***

It depends on your budget and how you're doing at the moment. If you're currently overwhelmed and you have a lot of business, start out slow. Get 3 references and good recommendations. Tell the potential consultants your story and let them suggest what they can do for you. It has to work for you. You have to enjoy working together, and what they suggest has to feel comfortable -- re: your budget as well as in their proposed messaging.

You know when it's time to hire someone when you start to hear "things are falling through the cracks." ... "The Facebook page isn't updated. We need a brochure and I don't have time to get to it." Then it's time to look at someone part-time, and then possibly even full-time. They should drive traffic to your site and your product. You should see an increase in sales in relation to their cost.

***I already go to farmers markets and have a pretty good customer base there. What other ways can I reach more people? At the farmers market, aside from literature? Or other places?***

Ask your customers to refer you. When you have a satisfied customer, ask them if they would spread the word. Sometimes if you don't ask, people will forget to tell others.

You can also offer a coupon for a friend. "Give this coupon to a friend".

Ask people to take a picture with you at the farmers market holding your product in their hand and post it to their Facebook page and have them tag your farm. You could give them 10% more free or offer up something that does not break the bank. Post that same picture to your wall and tag them and say something like " We sure love our customers".

Ask your followers to share your Facebook posts on their wall. You can post really great pictures, recipes, funny things happening on the farm etc.

***What are some good ways to promote a U-Pick, aside from at our farmers market stall?***

Similar answer to the Farmers Market - when people are picking, ask them to take pictures and share on their Facebook wall and tag your farm.

Make sure that you have a nice looking and legible sign. You could also ask neighbors nearby to put a sign on their lawn or land directing people to your location. I would also hold a big event

at your farm where kids can come and play. You could also have a school outing to your location as an educational event for school aged kids.

Get on local calendars that you could use to promote your days that you are open. Many kids/family publications have these and mom's and families look at them.

***Can you give a few examples of engaging blogs and examples of a good Facebook page? I need a role model example!***

The first thing we always recommend is, look at the big guys. If there is a company that you emulate, look at what they are doing and use that as your guide.

For example if you are a local produce grower look at Earthbound Farms Facebook and blog. They do a fantastic job. They also have a farm stand Facebook page too.

There are so many great blogs and Facebook pages (I will list a couple Facebook pages I found) but what really makes them great are the pictures, the stories and the writing AND that they are kept up to date. Don't start one if you are not going to work at it.

Here are some great Facebook pages:

- Suzie's Farm has a fantastic Facebook page and their website is adorable. It has a lot of beautiful photography: <https://www.facebook.com/suziesfarm/>
- Alderspring Ranch Grassfed Organic Beef is another great Facebook page for a producer: <https://www.facebook.com/alderspring/?fref=ts>