Production and Marketing Strategies that Match Consumer Demand

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General Observations

- There is no Silver Bullet Solution
- Past ideas
- Communication is King
- Production
  - New varieties...Super Freak, gourds, color variations..........everybody does pretty good
Production

- Most growers do a great job of offering “new” varieties of pumpkin/gourd products

- It’s up to you because you customers probably have not idea what is available
Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Websites
- YouTube

- Many consumers interested in constant contact........information
Being Part of the Community

- Involvement with Chambers and Tourism staff
- Storefront/Downtown Decoration Contests
- Early strategic neighborhood/business displays
  - BAIT!
Advertising

- Probably not block ads in local paper
- Through Social Media
- Coupons on back of business card?
Logos and Branding

- If you don’t have a logo... get one!
- Promotional items very reasonable
  - For employees (keep separate)
  - For customers
- Hats, shirts, bumper stickers, key chains, huggies, calendars
Cooperative Marketing

- What else is going on in your area?
- Can you work together more effectively?
- Customer referral
- Offer a more “complete” experience
Season Extension

- Add crops/products to keep the customer engaged and thinking about your farm
- How to better utilize resources
  - Multiple enterprises
Diversify Operations

- It may be difficult to meet financial goals with seasonal income
- Difficult to make $X,000,000 from one activity
- Maybe more achievable to have several things to make $X,000
  - It all adds up
Annual Business review
All employees/family members not created =

Redneck Swimming Pool
Know Your Customer

- More efficient to increase sales among current customer than to find new ones.
  - Find a way to track customer expenditures

- Gather information
  - They probably won’t fill out an “official” survey but most will give basic info to enter a drawing or other promotion
Target Market

- Brainstorm to identify new customer groups.
  - More efficient than broad marketing
  - Customers will share certain demographic characteristics
  - Schools, churches, civic organizations, clubs, businesses, etc.

- Also identify poor targets to avoid wasted marketing efforts
Customer Service

- Always strive to exceed the customers needs.
- Sometimes it doesn’t take much to make an impression (good or bad)
- Inform employees that there is more to their job than just selling (X).
- Consider formal training for staff
Develop Product Packages

- Give customers ideas of how they can use your products
- Many customers lack the imagination to visualize how your products could be used effectively at home
  - Example displays
  - Quantity discounts (but larger quantities)
Expand the Sales Season

- Utilize facilities outside of the main sales season
  - Weddings, reunions, retreats, meetings
- Camping?
- Star gazing?
- You have a private park
- Scouting events
Establish Relationships with local media

- They are always looking for stories but don’t always have time to come looking for yours.

- Be a news source even in the “off” season.
  - Keeps your name in front of the public
  - And you become a resource not a “beggar”
Add Value

- To the crop
  - Can you process surplus
    - Jams, salsas, sauces, wine?
  - Even a bow?
- Through the experience
The Value “Bundle”

Components of Value

- Quality
- Convenience
- Price
- Entertainment
- Experience
- Education
- Tradition
- ?
The Value Bundle

PRODUCT QUALITY

CONVENIENCE

SERVICE

PRICE

THE EXPERIENCE
Maintain Customer Contact

- In season
- In off season
- Newsletters
- Farm Updates
- Recipes
- Early order discounts
- Contests
Develop Partnerships

- **Cooperative marketing**
  - Brochures, media, etc.
  - Direct customers from business to business
  - Market the “package”
- **Work with other businesses**
  (agritourism or not) to hold customers in the area longer
Utilize Tourism Resources

- They can’t promote you if they don’t know you exist
- Tourism professionals are always looking for things to promote and package
- Helps to keep you informed of programs and opportunities that can benefit your business
Learn from your competitors

- Farmers
- Non-farm competitors
  - Kroger, Wal-Mart, etc.
- Visit other operations when possible
  - Send a spy!
  - Attend summer field tours
  - NAFDMA events
- Adapt vs. Adopt
Constant Innovation

- Adding attractions, expanding facilities, etc.
- Plants seeds of curiosity
  - Customers are anxious to come back to see what has changed from last year
Capitalize on Economic Challenges

- Know your market
- Make your business a “necessity” for your customers!
- If people aren’t traveling as much that doesn’t mean that they won’t do anything at all.
Displays Sell!!
Displays

- Restock frequently
- Maintain attractive product mix
  - When possible
- Cull damaged stock from displays often
- As supplies dwindle try replacing large 1/2 full bins with heaping smaller bins
- Bring your displays to life???????
Utilize Creative Displays

- Demonstrates product uses
- Attractive presentations will sell more
- Cull and restock frequently
- Condense displays toward the end of the season.
  - ½ bushel of anything in a ½ bushel basket will sell better than ½ bushel in a 1 bushel basket
Create Memories

- Explore opportunities to record the farm visit so that it will be in front of the customer all year.
- Picture Frames
- Digital pictures
- Video?
- Sell disposable cameras on-site
Custom Decoration

- Utilize employees in pre-season or on “slow” days to decorate area businesses
  - This could be done prior to the main sales season

- Also opportunities to work with FFA, 4-H, Schools or Church groups as a fund raiser

- Include a “disposal fee” too!
Fund raisers

- Options to work with schools, clubs, Church groups, etc.
  - Art club
  - Grade school festivals
  - ?

- Opportunities will vary and probably be fairly unique
Enhance Convenience

- Enhance convenience
  - Custom decoration for businesses
  - Pre-sorted decorative packages
    - Pumpkins, gourds, corn shock, straw, mums, ?
Expand Product Line

- New Varieties
- New Crops
- New prepared products
  - Jams
  - Salsas
  - Sauces
  - Crafts
- It’s OK to buy these from other vendors (Schwartz has apple juice!)