

## A COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING PROCESS for Arizona Cooperative Extension

There should be an important distinction between “marketing” and “selling”. Marketing begins with a focus on our clientele and their needs along with a sincere desire to develop a product (educational program) that addresses their needs. Selling begins with what we have for sale, and the needs of customers are secondary or even irrelevant. Although the term marketing is often used to mean selling, it is fair to say that when the marketing process is followed, the selling (i.e., convincing and exchanging) is very easy. In effect, the product sells itself.

Marketing maximizes our return for the effort and resources we expend, because it focuses our efforts to meet the unique needs of our customers. Marketing is also a way of thinking. Marketing consciousness begins when we critically at what we do in terms of who it attracts and who it doesn't attract. What is there in our marketing strategy that attracts certain kinds of people and not others? Because marketing is a way of thinking, it should permeate our entire organization and all of its activities.

To market effectively, whether from the state level, or on the county, and more specifically, individual program level, we must know who we are and what we can do. Effective marketing efforts also have the bonus in that they boost morale by recognizing individual knowledge, skills and abilities and communicating these to clientele, stakeholders and decision makers.

Development of a comprehensive marketing program includes the following:

### 1. Develop an organizational mission statement

While this is done on the state level and even national level through CSREED, specific programs (such as Master Gardeners, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Project WET, 4-H Youth Development) may want to think about developing their own mission statement,

### 2. Conduct an overall environment assessment and consider the implications of current trends for the organization:

- social/demographic trends,
- governmental changes,
- changes in the economy and the natural environment, and
- technological developments.

A close examination of how various channels of communication are functioning, a communication audit, may reveal how well you are getting your message across. A visual communication audit is a systematic examination and evaluation of outreach materials such as brochures, signs, educational posters and publicity materials. By looking at these materials you may be able to get a sense of whether each group within the county office, for example, or an educational program area is consistently identifying themselves. These may include how Cooperative Extension, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the University of Arizona and other funding organizations are identified. A visual communication audit can be conducted programmatically or for a specific geographic region. One example of this is a recent **visual communication audit** of UA Phoenix-area outreach materials, conducted by the UA Office of Advancement.

3. Set overall goals--general statements of desired accomplishments within a certain time period.

4. Identify the greater customer base that you want to serve, and then break that down into smaller, more groups using one or more factors, such as:

-Demographics - age, sex, family size, nationality, income, education, race, religion.

-Geography - region, county, community, neighborhood, urban/rural, population density.

-Psychographics - social class, life style, personality, special interests or hobbies, value systems.

-Work - occupations, kind of work, size of business or organization, particular products produced, issue or problem held in common.

Generally, it is best to segment the market as much as is appropriate for the issue under consideration. Offering nutrition programs to low income mothers, teaching low water management to master gardeners, and a leadership course for emerging community leaders in Arizona are all examples of education programs targeted to particular market segments.

5. Conduct market research for the segments with the greatest potential.

- a. Conduct assessments of current and future needs.
- b. Study market behavior of existing and potential customers.
- c. Utilize primary and secondary data by questioning, observing, experimenting, using census data, and reviewing other studies.

Even though we may feel we know our customers well, market research can be helpful to planning for future extension educational programs and better serving current clientele. For example, how will we know the educational needs of people on a fixed income living in an urban area unless we ask them in a systematic manner? Are their needs the same as those of limited-income residents living in more rural settings?

Focus groups have been an effective and relatively easy way to conduct market research. Identify and gather together a small group (8 to 15 people) representing a target customers (market segment) and ask them questions about their attitudes, knowledge, behavior, and preferences with respect to the good or service being marketed.

6. Learn from your competitors by studying their:

- Strengths and weaknesses.
- Appeals to the market.
- Desired position in the market.

7. Assess your own educational program, county office or regional effort. What are its:

- Mission, values, and purposes.
- Strengths and weaknesses.
- Resources and capabilities.
- Support groups and constituencies.

8. Develop a marketing strategy that identifies your niche (position) in the market.

A marketing strategy is a mix of (five P's of marketing):

- Product (educational program)
- Price (the cost in dollars, time, and other resources necessary to receive the product)
- Promotion (how the product is publicized - mass media, fliers, personal contact)
- Place/Distribution (Where is it offered - ranch, county office, satellite, by mail)
- People (Who is providing the product – paraprofessionals? the local county extension faculty? state specialists? researchers? guest speakers? coalitions? team members? competitors?)

To develop a marketing position:

- Consider capabilities, competition, and the needs of identified constituents (marketing segment).
- Know your distinctive competency.
- Differentiate yourselves from your competitors (better, faster, more accurate).

-Develop a plan of action based on this position.

-Implement the plan of action

-Evaluate and assess impact of:

1. the marketing mix (five P's)
2. the product delivery
3. receptivity of the market
4. the impact of the product

*Helpful resources*

-*“The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing” by Reis and Trout*

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Cooperative Extension  
University of Arizona  
Forbes 301, P.O. Box 210036  
Tucson, AZ 85721-0036  
Phone: (520) 621-7205  
Fax: (520) 621-1314

<http://cals.arizona.edu/extension/>  
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