With the direct marketing season in full swing, it’s a good time to step back and examine some of the tools and marketing techniques that can have a substantial impact on your success as a direct marketer. Whether the outlet is a farmers’ market, your on-farm stand, or working with your CSA or wholesale accounts, check if how you’re implementing your marketing strategies falls into any of these categories:

**THE GOOD:**

1. Always offering high quality products through all your marketing outlets. The “Buy Local” theme is spilling out beyond edibles and into the market for services and experiential activities such as agritourism. Providing your customers a consistently high quality product, service, or experience will help garner more repeat business for you.

2. Many farmers’ markets are better organized than ever before. Market management is doing a better job of market design, servicing a wider variety of vendors, and keeping up with technology such as accepting EBT payments.

3. New technology such as Square Register for taking credit card payments and new marketing tools such as QR codes are making sales transactions easier than ever. Social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest provide new ways to communicate with customers in a timely and interesting fashion.

**THE BAD:**

1. Inconsistent quality or questionable sourcing. The most sustainable markets are those who offer consistently high quality products and are transparent about their sources. Sometimes crops fail or delayed due to weather. Either take this opportunity to educate your customers about the risks in farming or if you source from someone else, let customers know that these products are from another grower. Customers trust a farmer’s integrity. Breach that trust and customers will become suspicious of all farmers.

2. Lack of signage and pricing at point of sales. Customers don’t want to ask for pricing. Signage on your product can be like a label. Labels are the first thing customers see on a product so take advantage both the great eye appeal of your products along with signage.

3. Making negative comments about other vendors or their products is a poor sales technique.

**THE UGLY:**

1. Inattentive vendors. Don’t let your customers find you reading the paper or constantly chatting with the vendor next to you or employees at your farm. It’s sending the message that they’re purchasing experience isn’t important to you.

2. Hanging on your cell phone, constantly checking emails, or texting.

Your primary goal as a direct marketer is to give customers an exceptional buying experience. That includes the quality of the product, information about the product, how it was produced or sourced, and the level of customer service you offer. Make it all good.