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Keep It Local And Seasonal, Keep It Real

Source: **The Hartman Group: How America Eats 2010 report** -
www.hartman-group.com

The heightened interest among consumers for local and seasonal foods is a reflection of a greater interest in healthier eating and a deeper desire for higher-quality food experiences.

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Photo: pixabay.com

Best Marketing Practices for the Holidays

By: Ginger S. Myers, UME

The best marketing practices for the holidays is to follow Stephen Covey's advice about the 7 habits of effective people, "start with the end in mind." Your "end" is to get more customers and make more profits. Now is the time to prepare to ramp up your business. Actually, ramping up for many direct marketers starts with their Fall events, but there's still time to capture a greater share of the winter holiday season. The holiday season is the most important shopping time of the year. In 2013, \$81.1 billion were spent on holiday shopping. That's 17% of annual retail sales in just two months! Here's how to get a slice of the pie:

- Start planning your main campaign **right now** so you're ready to launch well before Black Friday. By doing so, you'll be able to take advantage of last-minute marketing opportunities.

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- Analyze your inventory. Take a good look at all the products and services you provide. Are there any offerings that would be more useful at certain times of the year or around certain holidays? Organize all your products into specific groups according to their usefulness or tie-ins with specific dates.
- Buy a large desk calendar with lots of room for writing. Take a colored pen and highlight all the upcoming holidays and any other special events or seasons you want to plan for in the upcoming months. Decide on target dates when you'd like to get an offer out to your current customer list or start a new marketing effort or promotion. Instead of promoting your items a week ahead of a certain holiday or event, you can begin a starter campaign two months before an event and escalate your efforts as the specific day draws near.
- Repetition sells, so market often. Send multiple emails or holiday cards announcing your sales.
- Concentrate on marketing your niche products to a highly targeted audience.
- Host a holiday season kick-off event to bring customers in – such as a tree-lighting ceremony with hot chocolate and a visit from Santa – and make sure customers leave with your holiday catalog.
- Use email, social media and your website to let customers know about your upcoming deals.
- Feature your upcoming holiday specials on your blog and reinforce the reasons why it's better to buy from you than your competitors.
- Keep your business top of mind every day. Give 2015 calendars away before your competitors do, so you can ensure you're the brand customers see day in and day out.
- Here's some food for thought: Partner with a restaurant to print table tents that promote your company to their customers.
- Make sure all of your holiday marketing is measurable so you can track your return on investment and plan for an even more profitable



campaign next year. Record what is working for your business and what is not. Mistakes can help better channel your choices for your marketing resources.



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University of Maryland, the Department of Entomology is offering online graduate programs that provide an overview about the importance of insects and their role in various ecosystems.

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oes.umd.edu/professional-programs/entomology

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Why Do I Need a Business Plan for My Farm?

By: Ginger S. Myers, UME

Imagine visiting New York City for the first time and trying to find your way around without a map. You might find some of the places you want to visit, but not without a lot of detours and lost time. Time you could have spent visiting sites and enjoying the city.

This is exactly what you're doing with your business if you don't have a business plan. Your business plan is your road map to implementing your business ideas and measuring your success along the way. Even if your farm is an avocation, without a plan, you're likely to run down a lot of dead-ends paths and waste a lot of time and money.

More to the point, if you're thinking about starting a business, creating a plan will help you focus the elements needed to get your business up and sustainable. If you already have a business, your business plan can help keep you focused on your goals, serve as a reality check, and help get you back on track if you get side-tracked. If an existing business is experiencing financial difficulty, carefully reviewing an existing business plan or even writing one for the first time can help you determine if the business is in a "save" or "sale" position.

There is a lot of controversy about the value of a business plan. Comments run from "business plans are useless" to "business plans are essential." If you have someone else write your business plan or you use a pre-programmed computer program and guess at the numbers, then the resulting plan will probably be useless. But, a business plan that you develop yourself, with some review and consultation from an Extension Farm



Management Specialist or other business management professional, can help you systematically think through the steps involved in your business development. It is this process of planning that pays dividends.

A well thought-out business plan:

DEFINES YOUR VENTURE: Describes your product or service. Details on your market and how you plan to get your product to market. It also describes where you plan to do business and what skills and experiences you bring to the table.

SURVEYS THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT:

Describes the existing market and how you will fit into it. What is your advantage and how will you capture market share?

ESTIMATES YOUR FINANCIALS: Estimates your fixed and variable costs, identifies your funding sources and assets, and projects revenues and cash flow.

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Where do you find all this information? Start with an outline of the business you plan to operate and fill in as much information as you can about what you plan to sell, how you plan to sell it, and how much NET profit you plan to generate in the first year. Develop the same outline for your business at 3 years. These are just rough outlines and will quickly show you where you're missing valuable information in your planning. You're looking for as much factual information as possible. Gather information using your records or if you must, use estimates based on enterprise budgets. Question your potential customers and suppliers about their preferences and prices. Glean as much information as possible about your business from: competitors, industry specialists and consultants, industry associations, publications and journals, educational institutions and government agencies, and the Internet.

Not all business plans are the same since not all businesses are the same. Also, business plans are often written for different reasons. Plans written to obtain financing must not only explain the business, but justify its repayment abilities. Other plans are written for planning purposes. Here the process of planning is more important than the paper plan. Either way, the components of a business plan are the same:

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** This is a quick description of everything about the farm or company, its products, services, and outlook for the future based on simple statistics. The Executive Summary must entice the reader to read the rest of the plan. The Executive Summary may be the only section some readers read. It appears first in the business plan, but write it last, after you've written all the other sections so you can have the total picture of your business in mind.
2. **TABLE OF CONTENTS:** This is for quick perusal.
3. **THE FARM OR COMPANY:** This is your story about the farm or company, its history, direction, values, goals, etc.
4. **PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:** An in depth description of your product or service. What will you sell?
5. **PRODUCTION:** How will you produce your product and what raw products are involved?
6. **MARKETING:** A detailed marketing plan includes what and how you will advertise, margins, demographics, targeted outlets, and any sales agreements already secured.
7. **COMPETITION:** An evaluation of your competition and how you will position your products to be different or better.
8. **OBSTACLES:** What hurdles will your business meet and how will you deal with them?
9. **FINANCES:** Cost of set up and operation, as well as day to day financial needs for overhead and marketing. Include an income statement, cash flow analysis and balance sheet. You can get these from your accountant. Don't have an accountant? Get one.
10. **GOALS AND MILESTONE:** This is the timeline for the future of your business.

The local and seasonal connection to quality



Local and seasonal are key elements of a higher-quality experience.



Why Do I Need a Business Plan for My Farm?

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When writing your business plan it is also helpful to remember a few “Do’s” and “Don’ts.”

Do

- Put your main selling points (most important to the business) into the Farm, Company and Marketing sections when you begin your plan. Example: If you plan to sell artisan cheese, how do you plan to make the cheese and sell it will be more important than where you get the milk.
- Include references of where you obtained any of your numbers.
- Sell the benefits of your products and not its features. Example: People are often attracted to the convenience of a produce subscription service that delivers as much as they are to the fresh produce they receive.

Don't

- Use pure hype. You’re writing a plan, not a press release.
- Go overboard on the length. Most plans are 15-30 pages plus appendixes. Your plan may be complete with 8 to 10 pages.
- Use graphs and spreadsheets. The assumptions and arguments are more important. Analyze the numbers and write out your predictions.

The business plan that you develop, and revise on an on-going basis, will be a valuable tool. However, these plans are not written in stone and you may not follow your plan exactly. Cities build new streets that may not be on their maps. But with a map, you can still successfully arrive at your planned destination.

Social Media Reflects Changes in Meal Planning, Preparation, and Eating

Source: The Hartman Group: Clicks and Cravings - www.hartman-group.com/publications/reports/clicks-amp-cravings

Social media has made an indelible imprint on food culture. With the click of a finger, social media changes how we plan, buy, cook, and eat food. As consumers discover, learn, and share online, they become active participants in food culture. Social Media's impact can be seen on the transformation of the meal.

Food Culture in the Digital Age



Social media has changed the lifecycle of the meal



	TRADITIONS (meal planning)	TRANSACTIONS (shopping)	TECHNIQUES (preparing)	TABLE (eating)
YESTERDAY	Family traditions and ethnicity determine foods prepared	Shop at neighborhood grocer	Recipes and techniques from Mom and cookbooks	Families eat together around a table
TODAY	Media, travel, retailers, restaurants, and brands introduce us to new tastes, cuisines, and possibilities	Source food via multiple channels, restaurants, farmer's markets, online	Recipes and techniques from TV shows, websites, blogs, online videos	People eat with computers, mobile devices, televisions, and increasingly alone (often without a table)

Source: Clicks & Cravings: The Impact of Social Technology on Food Culture 2012 report

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