

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR PROMOTING YOUR MARKET



Introduction

**For people to shop at your market, they first need to know about your market...
and this can be harder than it sounds!**

Your promotional strategies will be unique to your market and will depend on funding, staff capacity, community demographics, and many other variables. The good news: farmers markets have been at this for a while, generating a lot of collective experience on which to draw.

We hope these resources -- which outline tested, successful techniques and strategies -- will serve as a springboard for your market outreach. Here's to making your market vibrant, bustling, and sustainable!

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR PROMOTING YOUR MARKET



MAXIMIZE YOUR PEOPLE POWER

What if your budget can't support full-time outreach staff?

Consider volunteers. While recruiting takes time and energy, these efforts can yield big in the long run. Students and community members who shop at the market are great candidates.

- Host local college interns looking for some job experience
- Research youth employment programs in your area
- Find local retirees who love their neighborhood and your market
- Seek out long-time residents with strong neighborhood connections



A volunteer at the Pigtown Community Farmers Market paints faces as a way of entertaining the market's youngest visitors.

PRO TIPS

Identify what activities you need help with and what skills would be most valuable. Tailor your recruiting efforts accordingly.

Offering incentives for volunteers, such as market vouchers, market gear (totes, t-shirts), or hosting volunteer appreciation celebrations.

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BECOME A "DESTINATION" MARKET

Infusing your market with events and activities can help establish your market as part of the weekly social scene. Fostering a community gathering space can be especially useful for young farmers markets: a new visitor who comes to a market event will likely end up buying food as well, and a new market customer is born!

FOR CHILDREN

- face painting
- arts and crafts (sidewalk chalk)
- hula hoops
- back-to-school days
- scavenger hunts

FOR ADULTS

- health screenings by hospitals/healthcare providers
- board games (e.g. chess)
- group exercise classes (yoga, martial arts, Zumba)

FOR ALL AGES

- cooking demos and tastings
- live music
- poetry readings
- performance art (e.g. magicians)
- book or toy swap

PRO TIPS

- Arrange a visit from your [local library](#), or get free books from the Maryland Book Bank; story time is a good way to keep children occupied while parents shop.
- Set up a tent with some [chairs and tables](#) for customers. This will encourage people to linger, share a meal, and build community.
- Invite different community organizations to come table.
- Orchestrate tours on foot or by bike – natural/environmental, historical, or cultural; also a good way to partner with neighborhood institutions and associations.
- Plan a customer appreciation day/ harvest party in the fall with music, food, and prizes. Ask community businesses to sponsor or donate prizes.



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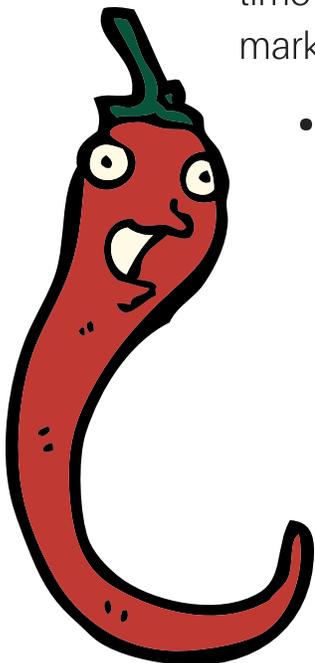
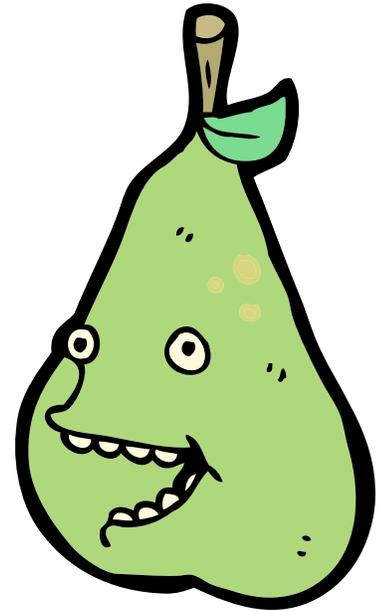
TALK IT UP: USING WORD OF MOUTH

FUN FACT: Most markets consider word-of-mouth to be their most effective type of outreach.

Meeting with people to talk about your market can be time-consuming, but the payoff can be tremendous.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE:

- Tailor your message. Consider the person in front of you: what aspects of your market would hold particular appeal to them? Are they in it for the produce? The social atmosphere? The specialty items unavailable elsewhere?
- Entice new acquaintances with samples of market products or photos of irresistible market goods
 - Offer incentives, such as market vouchers for first-time shoppers or a "frequent shopper" program for market regulars
 - Offer incentives to customers who bring friends, family, or neighbors along to the market



GIVE IT A TRY:

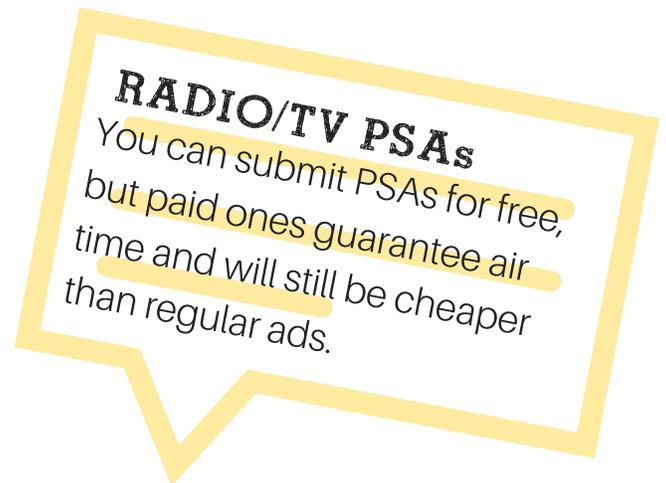
- Rally a group of volunteers and go door-to-door in the community, inviting your neighbors out to the market
- Table at neighborhood events
- Schedule presentations for community organizations and neighborhood associations

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LOW AND NO-COST ADVERTISING

Advertising can be expensive, but there are effective, low-cost ways to promote your market.



NEWSLETTERS

Electronic newsletters connect you with your customer base and appeal to a particular audience. Columns to try: farmer and vendor profiles; "Top 5 Things to at Market this Week;" weekly produce feature & recipe.

PRO TIPS

- Don't forget to list hours and address
- If budget allows, include a coupon in ads and in your newsletter
- At the market info tent, encourage shoppers to follow the market on social media and sign up for your emails

SOCIAL MEDIA



- Social media can help expand your reach while engaging existing customers, but it only works if you use it consistently
- Tag community partners and market vendors to encourage them to like and share your posts
- Use #lovemdmarkets hashtag

WEBSITE

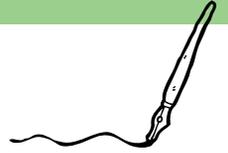
Even if it only features basic information about the market, it's important to have a functional, up-to-date website.



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CELEBRATE THE WRITTEN WORD



Printed materials are an excellent way to share information about your market. Just make sure that they always include the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY:

- Market name and logo
- Time and location (omit opening and closing dates to keep materials evergreen)
- Vendor line-up
- If you accept SNAP/offer incentives
- Website and social media handles

1. Postcards, flyers and magnets

These are small and easy to drop off or hand out. However, this makes them easy for customers to lose or toss. If your budget allows, consider printing a refrigerator magnet with evergreen market information

2. Posters

Posters can be large and eye-catching, and are often permanent or semi-permanent reminders displayed in a fixed location.

3. Door hangers

These are great for targeted outreach in the neighborhood. But getting them out definitely requires legwork and is a great task for a group of volunteers.

Where to distribute materials:



churches,
synagogues,
mosques, etc.

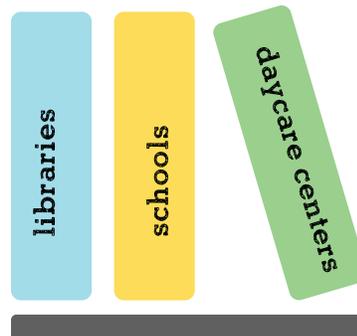
local businesses:
coffee shops,
restaurants,
convenience &
corner stores, etc.



social services
offices, nonprofits,
and other outreach
centers that
process SNAP
enrollment



hit the streets and spend
time connecting with
people face-to-face



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BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

*It's good to be connected; partnerships can enrich your market in many ways.
But to whom should you reach out?*



Neighborhood associations are generally happy to share information about community resources with their members. Association meetings can be a great opportunity to leverage "word-of-mouth" advertising, and many send newsletters as a means of keeping residents up to speed with area happenings.

Local municipalities and governing officials often support positive ventures in their jurisdictions, and cultivating their support can be instrumental in the market's success.



Introduce yourself to local officials and invite them to visit your market or serve as board members. Championing your market as a means of keeping dollars local might get their attention-- and even lead to a financial support for market programs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Be prepared with a market budget to complement a clear ask for support.

Local businesses can be strong allies for your market, especially if you build in promotional opportunities. Provide both fiscal and collaborative partnerships: official sponsorships are a great way for businesses to show community investment and gain exposure, but in-kind support (displaying market posters, distributing post cards, raffle items, etc.) can be valuable as well.



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GET TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

Knowing who utilizes your market can help guide your promotion and outreach strategies. So how do you find this out?

COLLECT ZIP CODES to find out where customers are coming from and inform where you should do targeted promotion. You can ask customers for this info when they use their debit, credit, or EBT cards at the market tent, or set up a poster board or map for customers to mark where they live.



CHAT WITH with customers to learn where they are coming from and how they learned about the market. Doing so not only helps you measure the effectiveness of different types of outreach, but is also a great way to build community.

How far do you travel to get to market?

How did you find out about the market?



USE SURVEYS to gather specific feedback from customers-- but remember to be respectful of their time. Keep surveys short, or find a way to compensate participants for their time. In-person surveys at market will require an on-the-ground presence, but generally yield better response rates than those distributed online.

PRO TIP *Be intentional: always think about what information you are collecting, and how you are going to use it. If you don't know, then it's probably not worth collecting it.*

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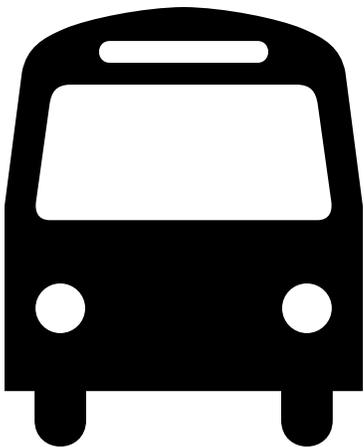
SERVE SENIORS AT YOUR MARKET

If seniors comprise a significant segment of your market's customer base, it is important to consider enhancing their experiences through targeted programming and outreach.

RECRUITING CUSTOMERS

Target senior centers and senior living complexes. It might take time before you figure out who is the best contact, but keep searching until you find your champion. Finding a member or resident who loves your market will likely be the best way to spread awareness through word of mouth.

TRANSPORTATION



Transportation to and from market can be a major challenge for many seniors. While some senior centers and residences have capacity to host weekly bus or van trips to market, most do not. Don't be discouraged! You may be able to find transport services through government or mobility agencies. If you arrange transportation, make sure buses/vans are willing to remain at market so seniors have a place to sit when they are done shopping. Alternatively, you can provide space at market for shoppers wanting a place to sit and rest.

SENIOR FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

In Maryland, income-eligible seniors can receive \$30/season in paper checks to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, and honey at Maryland farmers markets. Being present when these checks are distributed is a great way to let people know about your market. Distribution occurs at select senior centers in early July, and county Departments of Aging announce dates by June. See the MDFMA website in early summer for a complete list of list of dates and locations by June. If you can't be on-site during distribution, ask to leave postcards or flyers at the distribution center.



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SPREAD AWARENESS ABOUT USING NUTRITION BENEFITS AT MARKET

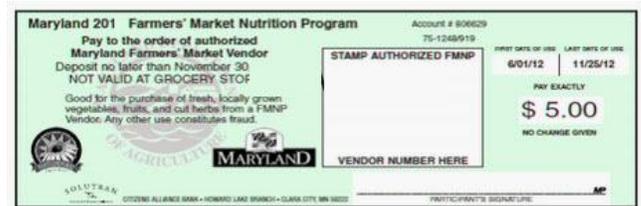
If your market is set up to accept all forms of payment, including SNAP and other federal and state nutrition benefits, how do you ensure that participants know they can use their benefits at your market?



Provide promotional materials about your market to government agencies, nonprofits, and other entities where people apply for SNAP benefits.

Arrange to have someone at your market host eligibility screenings and assist customers with their applications.

Invite the local WIC agency or clinic to distribute WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks at your market throughout the market season.



Provide area WIC offices and clinics, daycare centers, rec centers, libraries, and schools with a steady supply of promotional materials. Presentations work, too!

PRO TIP *Be persistent and consistent. Remember that nutrition benefits programs often experience high turnover rates, which means there will always be new enrollees who haven't heard about your market yet.*

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EMBRACE INCLUSIVITY

To truly create a community space, invest in building a market that responds to the rich fabric of cultures, languages, and tastes of your current and potential customers.

Find out what languages are spoken around your market and what non-English speaking communities live in the area.

Translate materials and provide interpretation services at market, both for general information and for benefits screening/application assistance. Local college students or bilingual community residents may be willing to lend their time.

Would a segment of your customer base want to purchase a cut of meat or type of produce not currently available at market? Encourage vendors to introduce new, diverse items catering to the community-- everyone wins!



Find out what culturally specific organizations are nearby. Make time to go to their events to get to know them and promote your market. Organizations and non-profits that help refugees with the resettlement process are good resources for help spreading market awareness.

Even if there isn't a large non-English speaking population near your market, people may be willing to travel farther to get to your market if it provides these kinds of services or caters to their community.