



CUSTOMERS – HOW TO ATTRACT THEM TO YOUR MARKET

SIGNS AND BANNERS

Extensive research throughout the UK shows that the best way to publicise markets is by using road signs and banners. These need to be positioned on key access routes into town, at key junctions and roundabouts and anywhere else that catches the eye of your customers.

Signs should be simple and just give the key message, for example:

Ideally signs should be put up a couple of days before the market, particularly if your market does not run weekly.

Council views on temporary signs of this nature vary widely. Some are supportive and will allow this sort of sign to be fixed to street lights and other street furniture. Others are less tolerant and will remove and destroy signs.

If possible it's useful to get agreement from the council for temporary signs. Economic development officers are generally very helpful but you will need to get support from the planning department and the highways department as well.

It's useful to remind them that you will remove all temporary signs after the market. It is worth bearing in mind that councils may be more tolerant of directional signs than of ones that might be considered purely promotional.

If your council is not as supportive as it could be, consider other sites that you could use. Often shops will put up signs. Local farmers may own land alongside approach routes into town and supporters of the market may be prepared to put up a sign on





their fences. Check that the distance from the road is legal. Schools might even put up banners on their railings.

Digital technology has dramatically reduced the cost and ease of producing signs and banners. If you are able to buy in quantities of ten or more then costs can be reduced further.

Make sure your signs and banners are as clear as possible. Use fonts that are easy to read. Maximize legibility by using color combinations that contrast in brightness such as black and white. For road signs make sure your text is large enough to be read easily from a distance. Don't forget to remove signs between markets.

OTHER WAYS OF GETTING YOUR CUSTOMERS INVOLVED

You might also want to consider ways of getting customers more involved with your market by, for instance, inviting them to join your committee or setting up 'Friends' schemes.

Customers can be passionate about the farmers' market ethos and might want to help with the market. It's always a good idea to have customer representatives on your management committee. Making sure you meet the needs and expectations of your customers is crucial to your success so it's good to keep in touch with them. Or you might set up a scheme for 'Farmers' market Friends' – for a small membership fee a range of benefits can be offered.

Here are 2 examples of 'Friends' schemes:

Wirral Farmers' Market Friends scheme

How does it work?

By paying your membership fee and completing a membership form, you will automatically become a Friend for one year. You will be sent regular email newsletters and information and will find out how to get more involved in the work of the Market.

What do Friends receive?

- 🍏 A Pin Badge to show that you are a Friend of Wirral Farmers' Market.
- 🍏 Automatic entry into a monthly prize draw for £15 in vouchers (you must be present at the market to collect your prize!).



- Regular email newsletters about forthcoming markets – keep up to date on what is in season, new producers and special offers.

How much does it cost to join?

Membership of the Friends is only £1 for a year's membership and this includes your badge.

North East England Friends of Farmers Markets

Express your support for your local farmers' market and for farmers' markets across the region by becoming a Friend.

Benefits include:

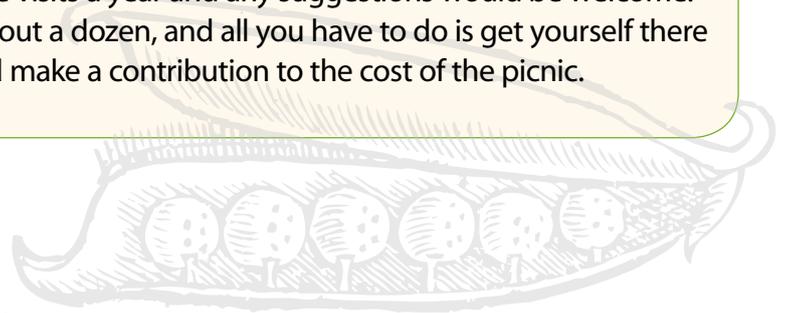
- Receiving a newsletter and advance news on food events and shows.
- Receiving invitations to visit producers and to special events.
- Volunteer opportunities to support local producers and your local Farmers' Market.

The annual subscription is £10, half of which will go directly to support your local farmers market.

Visits

The visits are to Farmers' Market producers and other interesting people and places connected to local food and drink. Whilst mainly for enjoyment, the visits are also an opportunity to learn more about how food is grown, raised, caught, brewed, baked and processed and how it relates to the land and seascapes of the North East.

The aim is to run two or three visits a year and any suggestions would be welcome. Visit groups are limited to about a dozen, and all you have to do is get yourself there (we'll provide directions) and make a contribution to the cost of the picnic.





Volunteering

Friends who volunteer their time at their local Farmers Market could find themselves:

- Helping with activities like Apple Days and Christmas Markets.
- Setting up and running a food sampling table.
- Carrying out price comparisons with similar supermarket produce to challenge the perception that produce at Farmers' Markets is expensive.

It's a great way to meet like minded people and a big help to producers.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Forging close links with your local community can be really helpful. We have observed that markets that have close links with their communities are often more successful.



Involve other 'Green' groups

Community/green groups can provide useful networks for communication about market dates and events and may even provide volunteers to help run markets. Inviting appropriate community and charity groups to take a stall on your market can be a great way of communicating with the local community and using their networks to reach new customers.

Events with schools

Educating the next generation about where food comes from and how to cook it is important. Farmers' markets can offer great educational opportunities – from running cooking events for children to growing contests for pumpkins or sunflowers. Getting children along to markets will help encourage parents to visit too.





Markets have also arranged to have live animals at markets for instance new born lambs at Easter. However care needs to be taken to address all health and safety issues, including provision of hand-washing facilities.

Leaflets, postcards, calendars and posters

Leaflets, flyers, postcards and posters can be cheap to produce and they can be a very effective way of communicating to existing and new customers. Leaflet drops can be targeted on streets and areas that contain a high proportion of farmers' market customers. Postcards can carry seasonal recipes along with photographs or drawings of local produce. Postcards are also great for dropping into shoppers' bags and, if they list dates of markets, are good for reminding people about the future dates for markets.

Many markets run once a month so it's vital to do everything possible to remind people about the date for the market. It's not easy to work out when the third Saturday of the month falls so calendars or other ways of prompting customers are important.

Printed materials need to be spread as far and wide as you can manage. Think about places to leave your leaflets that are likely to share farmers' market values. Some places to consider include doctors' surgeries, schools, tourist information centres, libraries, parish notice boards, community centres and shops/restaurants/cafes that promote local food.

Website, emails, Texts, Facebook, Twitter

We are in an age of electronic communications – use them! Using electronic communications can be a very cheap and effective way of reaching lots of people.

The first place to look for information for many people is now the internet. Make sure that you have coverage for your market – ideally your own website, but if this is not possible then make sure you are listed on the sites that provide information on farmers' markets. Specific sites include:

www.localfoodadvisor.com
www.local-farmers-markets.co.uk
www.farmersmarkets.net

Other places to register information on-line include on council websites and tourist information websites such as:

www.information-britain.co.uk



Google your own market to see where and how information about it appears. Sometimes other websites will list old or inaccurate information. Make sure you keep sites up to date.

Setting up an email or text reminder service for your customers is a great way of reminding them a couple of days before the market, giving the details for the market as well as telling them about what special produce will be available. You can collect email addresses at your information stand on your market, or by running competitions that require entrants to give their email details.

Provided you have asked if it is OK to make contact in the future then you will meet the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

Facebook and Twitter are other ways of keeping in touch with your customers. Different methods will suit different people so think about using a range of ways to keep in contact with your customers.

Newsletters and e-newsletters

Another great way of keeping in touch with customers! Use newsletters to remind customers about market dates, announcing special events and providing information about what's in season, how to cook it, new producers or seasonal producers – tempt your customers to come back to your market and to try new things. Newsletters are a great way of passing on terrific stories about producers and the fabulous produce they bring to market.

The media

The media can be great supporters of farmers' markets. Good food and protecting the environment are still popular topics and farmers' markets combine these two themes.

Make sure you keep in contact with your parish newsletters, local newspapers, 'what's on' diaries as well as radio and TV. Keep sending stories to your local papers and always send a good photograph if you can. If you get to know your local journalists, they may start to approach you for stories.

To the outside world, something that you take for granted may be a great story! But make sure you have a good 'hook' to attract the journalist's attention. Journalists often



like stories of triumph over adversity – for example has a farmers’ market provided a vital new outlet for a local farmer? Use events as hooks. Invite a local celebrity or notable person to your market and ask the media to your event too.

Radio and TV may be willing to cover special events such as formal opening ceremonies. Local radio stations have run outside broadcasts from markets and invited producers to speak regularly about their farms and what they produce.

The bottom line is that this can be a very cost effective way of creating awareness for your market. If you can establish a list of media contacts, it can be quite quick and easy to keep sending stories through to your local press.

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Writing press releases

The purpose of a press release is to grab a journalist’s attention quickly. It must be factual, concise and informative.

Headline

Don’t spend time thinking of a clever headline; sub editors will do this themselves. Use a title rather than a headline, for example ‘(Local celebrity) to launch farmers’ market’.

Opening paragraph

Your opening paragraph is the most important part of the press release; if it doesn’t command attention in the first line the remainder will not be read.

Second paragraph

Give some more information. Why have you organised this event?



Comment

Include a quote – it gives the press release a human element.

Fourth paragraph

Background information. This would be where you give more information about the farmers' market.

Photography:

This is important. Ideally a press photographer will attend the event but they can often be called away at short notice, so always have someone on hand who can take photographs on the day that can be sent to the publication afterwards. Wherever possible, stage photographs to ensure they are suitable for the publication. If you have more than one person in the shot, make sure they are standing very close together so the photo can be cropped if necessary. Think about what you want in the background of the shot – a market banner, for example.

Contact details

Give a mobile number whenever possible. This persuades the journalist that you are easy to get in touch with and means they can call you on the day if they need directions.

Notes to Editors:

Include any other relevant information that an editor might wish to know.

Avoid jargon

Always assume your reader has no knowledge of your subject matter. Avoid technical language and state explicitly why local food is important.

Proof read

Spelling and grammar mistakes will undermine your credibility. Read quotes aloud to make sure they sound like someone has actually said them.

Sending your press release

Use a press release in the body of the email – not as an attachment. Make sure the title of the email is the title of your press release. If you have a generic email address, address it for the attention of the news editor or, where possible, a named journalist.



Other Tips

Be aware of publication deadlines and contact via email or phone in the morning to avoid stressful afternoons when journalists are rushing to get their copy in for the following day's publication. Aim to send your press release two weeks before an event and follow up with a phone call a couple of days beforehand if you have not received confirmation of attendance.

OTHER WAYS TO DRAWING PEOPLE TO YOUR MARKET

Go for awards

Enter your market for an award. Blow your own trumpet! Keep an eye open for competitions and awards such as those run by *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* as well as Radio 4's The Food Programme Food & Farming Awards. There are also regional awards run by local food groups. Winning an award gives you a great opportunity for publicity!

Indirect advertising

Local businesses may be willing to sponsor your market, or help distribute flyers and promotional material. For example estate agents claim that the presence of a farmers' market will increase house values in a town. They may be prepared to include calendars or flyers for farmers' markets in packs for prospective house buyers. Local pubs, and restaurants who share suppliers may be prepared to help publicise your market or get involved giving cooking demonstrations at markets. Don't forget this will be good publicity for them too.

Find a famous patron

Celebrity chefs and famous foodies have been generous with their support for farmers' markets because they appreciate the quality of produce available. If you know a food celebrity in your area, approach them and ask if they will act as your patron. Don't forget it's a two way thing – if you can persuade them to get involved opening new markets or making special appearances it's great publicity for you and will help to draw people to the market but it's also great publicity for them. Don't be afraid to ask – they can only say 'no'!



Word of mouth

When asked how they heard about the market people will often say that a friend told them about it. What people say about your market to their friends, family and work colleagues is very important to your market so make sure people have something positive to say.

Drawing people in on market day

Signs are crucial, but there are some other tricks you might try. One market organiser has a butcher's bicycle with boards on it giving details of the market. He rides around town at regular intervals whilst the market is on to encourage people to walk to the market from other parts of town. Another organiser walks round town with a sandwich board. We have heard of people dressing in chicken outfits, or other fancy dress costumes and handing out flyers. There are lots of variants on these themes, so think of something that works for your market as an extra promotional boost to push customers towards your site.



Importance of promotion for monthly markets

It's difficult to work out when the third Saturday of the month is so, if you run a monthly market, you will need to work extra hard to remind people. Putting signs up a couple of days before the market is the best thing to do but email reminders, newsletters or providing customers with printed calendars are also useful ways to nudge customers.

Once a market runs weekly, then this sort of reminder isn't so vital. Saturday just becomes 'Farmers' Market Day'.

Run a weekly market

Consider increasing the frequency of your market. Once a market runs weekly, it becomes part of a regular shopping pattern and it's much easier to remember that



Saturday is always market day. Instead of treating a farmers' market as a place to buy special treats and one-off indulgences, it becomes a place to pick up all the week's fruit and veg, a true alternative to supermarkets as a place to buy great quality seasonal food.

As one customer said to us: *"I don't just eat monthly"*

Inevitably, you will lose customers – some will move away or move on. As a guideline you might need to aim to attract 10% new customers to each market to make sure that you maintain customer numbers over time. It's a good target to set so that you focus on ways of attracting new customers. So, make sure that you continue to think about ways to extend your customer base and remember it's important to regularly monitor your footfall and customer numbers.

Now you have got potential customers to your market. the next step is to persuade them to part with their cash!



Disclaimer

The information and advice and guidance on this site is provided in good faith, and is for general purposes only, and any reliance you place on such information is therefore at your own risk. Weather conditions and seasonality may impact availability of produce and stall holder attendance at markets, and so we cannot guarantee the accuracy of all information.

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