Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Workshop and Tour

# Your unique marketing story

Right now many people in California want to know more about where their produce comes from. They want to buy product that is local, or Organic, grown on a small farm, or by a family, or by a Hispanic or Southeast Asian farmer. They want to know your story.

Distributors and wholesale buyers are looking for ways to sell to these customers. If you want to move product through these distributors, you have to help them tell the story and make it easy for them to do business with you.

The purpose of a written document is to have something you can give to buyers that will make them want to keep talking to you. You don’t have to cover everything. You need a unique marketing story that is short and persuasive.

**Your written story is:**

* About you and your family and the place you farm
* What you grow, how much, and when will you have it to sell
* What makes your product special and why should people want to buy it
* How can buyers contact you
* A picture

Use the Sample as a guide then write your own story using the Worksheet. You may use additional pages. We will review and edit it for you and return it by e-mail.

# Your unique marketing story (Sample)

***About you and your family and the place you farm***

Lee Farm is located just outside Sacramento on ten acres of fertile soil. Our large family works together to grow top quality Asian vegetables and chandler strawberries that we sell at the Farmers market and through select distributors. Everyone is involved in the farm and our four children have grown up learning the business.

***What you grow, how much, and when will you have it to sell***

We begin harvesting, Item one, Item two, Item three in the beginning of April and our Item four, Item five starts in June. The strawberries run from late April to August. We always experiment and enjoy hearing what our customers are interested in for next year. Depending on transportation and cooling arrangements we can sell by the box or pallet. We follow GAP food safety standards and ship with PTI compliant GS1-128 labels.

***What makes your product special and why should people want to buy it***

Our family farmed in the mountains of Laos for generations before coming to America in 1988 and we continue to grow high quality traditional crops today. Our smaller acreage, large family, fertile soils, and farming experience allow us to provide our customers exactly what they request even in small quantities.

***How can buyers contact you***

To discuss your needs please call David Lee at 530-758-xxxxx or email us at [xxxxxx](mailto:Visher@comcast.net). You may also check our website at

xxxxx

***A picture of you, your family, or your farm***



# Please turn to the last two pages (8 and 9) for your Marketing Story Worksheet and the Evaluation Form

# Orientation for the tour

**Date:** Monday, April 30 from 4:00 to 4:30

**Pick up:** San Diego Farm Bureau (*Here*!)

1670 E Valley Parkway

Escondido

**Registration:** See your workshop Agenda for registration form or call Barbara Henderson at CE **760-752-4724**

You must complete and hand in the evaluation form today and again after the tour

**Follow up:**

Our goal is for you to make new marketing connections and new sales. As part of the package we will contact you in a few weeks to see what happened and hear your opinion about the project. It is very important that you give us a way to reach you by phone or e-mail.

# Tell Your Story, Sell Your Produce: Workshop and Tour

Workshop Notes

# Introduction

Are you ready to start selling your boxed and labeled produce to buyers who want to know your story?

In this workshop you will learn how to sell to buyers who are looking for farmers who can provide labeled product for foodservice and specialty markets that care about small, local, and family farms like yours.

Learn about what buyers want from you, and the steps you will have to take to be ready to sell wholesale to them

You will write a Unique Marketing Story that we will edit for you and that you can give to buyers

After this workshop you are invited on a Market tour in San Francisco to meet some of these buyers

## Goals:

* Understand the big picture about what it takes to sell to these buyers
* Learn how to talk to buyers
* Create a document about your farm that you can give to buyers that helps you build a sales relationship with them
* Tour orientation

# What does it take to sell wholesale to values added distributors?

(We are not teaching all of these items here, only saying what you need and suggesting where to go for help

* Each of these things must to be in place in order to sell your own labeled and boxed product to a distributor.
* It’s not easy, but it is what it takes
* Farm Advisors have more information

## Post harvest system

The three main objectives of applying postharvest technology to harvested fruits and vegetables are:

* to maintain quality (appearance, texture, flavor and nutritive value)
* to protect food safety
* to reduce losses between harvest and consumption.

Keep it clean, cold, and fresh

## Standard pack, grade, label

Professional packing of product with consistent sizing, grading, and quantity in each box is key. Standard packs exist for just about all produce items.

### Label:

* The farm, grower or label name and location
* Identity of the contents (variety or product name)
* Quantity (net weight or count per package)
* Certification
* Country of origin

## Food safety plan and Traceability

All farmers will soon be required to have a Food Safety Plan and a way to trace where the product came from. This will be an asset to you as it helps you authenticate your story.

The buyers will tell you exactly what you need to have, but using Top10 or a like program and the On-Farm Food Safety Project gets you almost there.

### Traceability:

* GS1 – is an international standard for produce traceability
* (PTI) Produce Traceability Initiative is the coming program in California
* Top10 Produce is the best option for small farmers at $280 a year

### Food Safety Plan

* Sometimes called a GAP (good agricultural practice) There are many kinds all pretty similar
* a good one that the state certifies called **California Small Farm Food Safety Manual**
* I like the On-Farm Food Safety Project at FamilyFarmed.org http://onfarmfoodsafety.org/

## Harvest schedule and estimates so you can tell a buyer what will be available and when.

## The ability to discuss price

Don’t be shy. If you can say when, where, and how much you will have, the buyer can give you an estimate of price.

Look at the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service – Strawberries in San Francisco on February 27 were $19 to $20 a box (what a small grocer would pay)

## A plan to get your product to the buyer

Sometimes they pick up, sometimes you deliver, and sometimes you have to pay for trucking, combine with other growers, and use an aggregator.

(We didn’t say this was easy!)

# How do you talk to the buyers here in California?

If you have what the buyer wants they will not let language stand in the way. They want to talk to you as much as you want to talk to them. These buyers have great respect for growers.

## What you can expect from the buyer and what they expect from you:

* They are in a hurry and talk loud.
* They first want to know what you have, how much, and when it is available. Only then will they slow down for the details in your Unique Marketing Story.
* Buyers get right to business – They are not being impolite
* Phone calls will be interrupted.
* Telephone is OK, but a personal visit is important. Always call first for an appointment and be on time.
* Shake hands firmly when you meet and when you part. Be assertive and speak loudly.
* It does not matter what you wear or how rough your hands.
* If the buyer is a chef at a restaurant they will be very happy you came in, but don’t come before lunch or dinner hour
* They will criticize your product – don’t be offended, listen very carefully, repeat it back to them and tell them you appreciate their advice.
* Don’t be embarrassed to talk about money
* Never say yes when you mean no.
* If you can’t deliver, or if something goes wrong – always call the buyer right away
* Most important before, after, and during your time with the buyer – COMMUNICATE!

# Why you have to have your “Unique Marketing Story” ready when you are creating a relationship with new buyers?

If you can’t say who you are, what you do, and where you are going – you will never get there.

## What is a Unique Marketing Story

Other words for it:

* Elevator speech
* Value Proposition
* Profile
* Mission Statement

### It is your profile that you give to a buyer

* People want to know more about where their produce comes from.
* They want to buy product that is local, or Organic, grown on a small farm, or by a family, or by a Hispanic or Southeast Asian farmer.
* They want to know your story.

Distributors and wholesale buyers are looking for ways to sell to these customers. If you want to move product through these distributors, you have to help them tell the story and make it easy for them to do business with you.

## What is the purpose?

The purpose of a written document is to have something you can give to buyers that will make them want to keep talking to you. You don’t have to cover everything. You need a unique marketing story that is short and persuasive.

## What does it include?

* About you and your family and the place you farm
* What you grow, how much, and when will you have it to sell
* What makes your product special and why should people want to buy it
* How can buyers contact you
* A picture

## Write you story today

Use the worksheet to help you to write your own story. You may refer to the sample handout. You may use additional pages. We will review and edit it for you and return it by e-mail hopefully before the market tour.

Help with your speech – *(Get help from staff and/or partner with another farmer to review speech. Local hosts to provide as many bi-lingual staff to help as possible at the end of the workshop)*

* Review worksheet
* Assign helpers
* Pair farmers

# Your unique marketing story (Worksheet)

|  |
| --- |
| About you and your family and the place you farm |
| What you grow, how much, and when will you have it to sell |
| What makes your product special and why should people want to buy it |
| How can buyers contact you |
| A picture |

# Evaluation: San Diego tour and workshop

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Which workshop did you attend? Leave blank if you did not attend | * Escondido | ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐ |
| 1. Do you plan to go on the tour? How many people will come from your farm or family? | Yes ☐ No☐ Don’t know ☐  Count : | ☐ |
| 1. Do you box and sell some or all of your product using your own label now? | Yes ☐ No☐ |  |
| 1. What do you think will happen as a result of this workshop and tour? | * Learn what I have to do to sell boxed product * Make new marketing contacts * Learn more about the markets * Get help with marketing materiel * Other? | ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐ |
| 1. Did you complete a Unique Marketing Story worksheet? Do you need more help with it? Do you need a photo? | Yes ☐ No☐  Yes ☐ No☐  Yes ☐ No☐ |  |
| 1. Do you want more help with planning your business and marketing strategy? | Yes ☐ No☐ |  |
| 1. How many people from your farm came to the workshop? | Count |  |

**How can we reach you to follow up?**

Name:

Farm or business name:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email