

# Advertising, Promotions, and Publicity

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Distinguish between advertising, promotions, and publicity.
- ▶ Choose and develop the activities with the most potential to attract the new customers you seek while remaining within your market's budget constraints.

One of the major ways of increasing revenue is to bring new customers to the market. In the preceding chapters, you defined the type of customer you want to attract to the market. Your advertising, promotion, and publicity efforts should appeal to those customers.

## Advertising

Advertising can be defined as communication intended to raise awareness of the market, increase attendance, and/or influence purchasing. Farmers markets can advertise through a variety of media—from newspapers, radio, and television to bulletin boards and websites.

Tailor your advertising message to the audience you intend to reach. Use the goals you set in Chapter Six to guide your advertising efforts. If you want to reach more families, consider what you have learned about why they do or do not

shop at your market. What is important to this group of potential customers? What does your market have to offer? Create messages that communicate the ways your market can serve this group of customers and how your market is different and better than any competitor that also serves this group.

## Methods of Advertising

### Newspapers

Your local daily newspaper is one place to advertise but there are others as well, including free classifieds, neighborhood papers, free local weeklies, and grocery store circulars. Ask for nonprofit advertising rates and one-paid/one-free if you are purchasing a substantial number of ads.

Inserts into the paper are relatively inexpensive but should be printed on colorful paper to attract attention.

Ask the media outlet to sponsor the market. In exchange for publicizing the market in their paper, the name of the paper can be listed as a major sponsor on the

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market's poster. In Astoria, Oregon, Hipfish, a monthly cultural publication, provided the poster layout for the market and a significant ad for several months in return for listing as a major sponsor on the market poster. Both the paper and the market gained valuable publicity and reinforced the image of the other.

A special rate may be available if you take out a classified ad for an entire season, altering the ad each week to highlight new fruits and vegetables coming into season.

- ▣ "We spend \$160 each week on advertising in local, well-read newspapers and 40 percent of our customers come because of an ad in the paper."  
– Joanne Neft, Former Manager, Foothill Farmer's Market Association, Auburn, California
- ▣ "Since it is expensive to advertise in major city papers, we advertise to target the organic shopper. Puget Sound has a large network of natural grocery stores and we advertise in their newsletter and also in weekly alternative papers that tend to be read because they have a more sophisticated food shopper."  
– Chris Curtis, University District Farmer's Market, Seattle, Washington

### Radio – Local Public and Commercial Stations

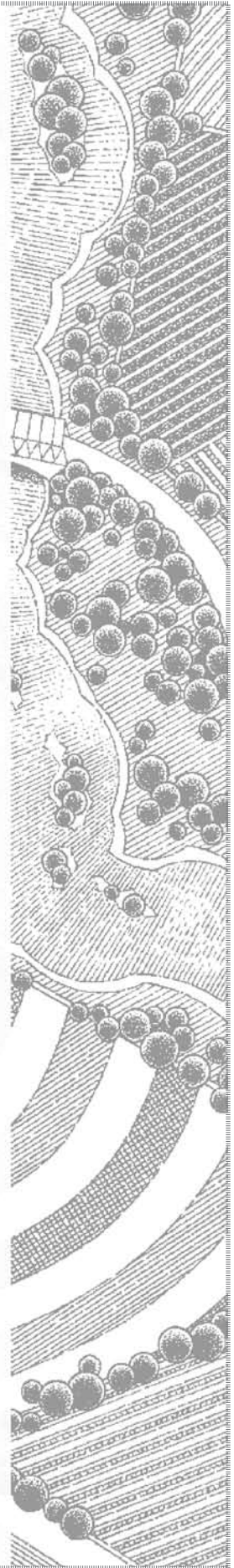
- ▣ "We do a market report on a local radio station each Saturday morning at nine. We tell people what is at the market that day."  
– Karl F. Schaefer, Manager, Chapel Hill-Carrboro Farmer's Market, North Carolina
- ▣ "Radio is the best media for special events or sales but keep your message simple. Use the best stations available that cater to your audience. Purchase the best times available. The ads cost more but for a good reason. They are reaching more listeners . . . Do not confuse listeners by listing your entire schedule. They won't remember it anyway."  
– Dan Haakenson, The Small Commercial Grower

### Flyers and Handouts

Include coupons on a flyer to make it more eye-catching and attractive. People may be more likely to make their first trip to the market if they receive a discount. The coupon could be for two dollars off a purchase or for a free apple or melon. When customers come to the market to redeem their coupons, they are likely to buy other items as well.

### Posters and Post-ups

Posters are not for conveying information, which is better delivered by a brochure. Posters are designed to catch the eye, get people interested in the market, and let them know where it is located and when it is open.





- When the Santa Monica Market started in 1981, it spent \$4,000 on a thousand eleven-by-seventeen-inch four-color posters. The poster was sharp and professional and most were posted in local businesses. The last 400 were reserved to sell at the market and recouped more than half the expense of printing the poster. The high-quality poster reinforced the high-quality image the market was working to establish and Santa Monica quickly became one of the top markets in the U.S.
- Other markets do not have the resources with which to create a flashy poster and instead work with the local printers. When a market started in Astoria, Oregon, in 2000, a local printer donated a free ink color for the poster and the market organizers developed an attractive, red-on-yellow eleven-by-seventeen-inch poster for only fifteen cents per copy. They placed matching flyers next to retail cash registers in the area to reinforce the poster and established an identity for the market on a very small budget.



### Postcards

Postcards can be passed out and mailed to supporters and the community at large.

- Every year the Camden Farmers Market in Maine begins the season by mailing a “Welcome Back” postcard to a mailing list of customers compiled from all the market’s members.

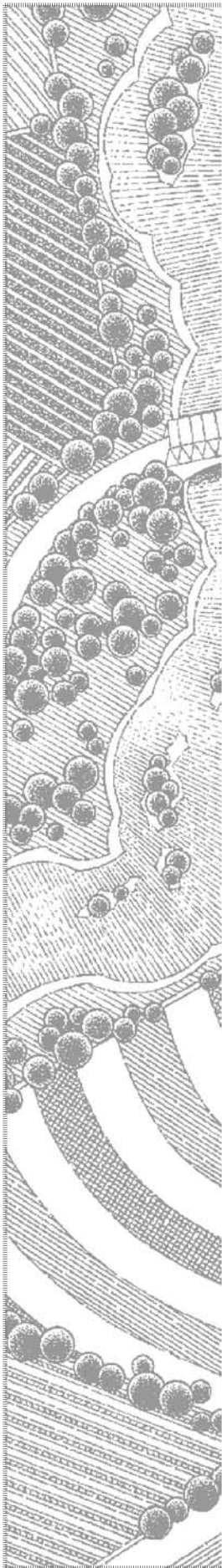
### Mailings

Local civic organizations like the chamber of commerce, the Lions’ Club, and Rotary may be willing to mail a flyer or brochure about the market with their monthly newsletters. Budget to pay for the cost of producing the flyer and the extra postage required to send it in their mailing.

Word-of-mouth advertising can be promoted through “Tell a Friend” mailings. Market shoppers can write the name and address of a friend on this special market mailing and the manager then adds the postage and sends it out.

### Merchandise with the Market Logo

Merchandise displaying the market logo—pint glasses, t-shirts, aprons, cloth shopping bags, hats, buttons, bookmarks, and bumper stickers—can be used by staff and sold at the market and elsewhere.



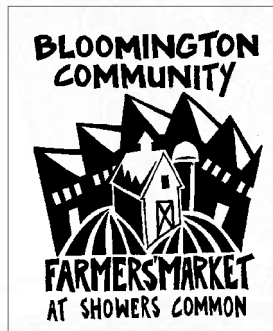
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### Signs

Signs include billboards, banners, and sandwich boards that direct people to the market as well as permanent signs that remain at the market site.

Sandwich boards announce that the market is open, communicate that it is a fun place, and direct traffic there. Include the market's logo, street address, and hours of operation plus directional arrows to help customers find the market.

Highway signs let drivers know that there is a market nearby. Local legislators can work with your state's Department of Transportation to place signs on nearby highways. In St. Louis, the Soulard Market paid less than \$4,000 for ten-year sign placement that included maintenance.



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### Restaurants

Restaurants that use produce from the market can display the market's logo on their menus and other signs.

### Brochures

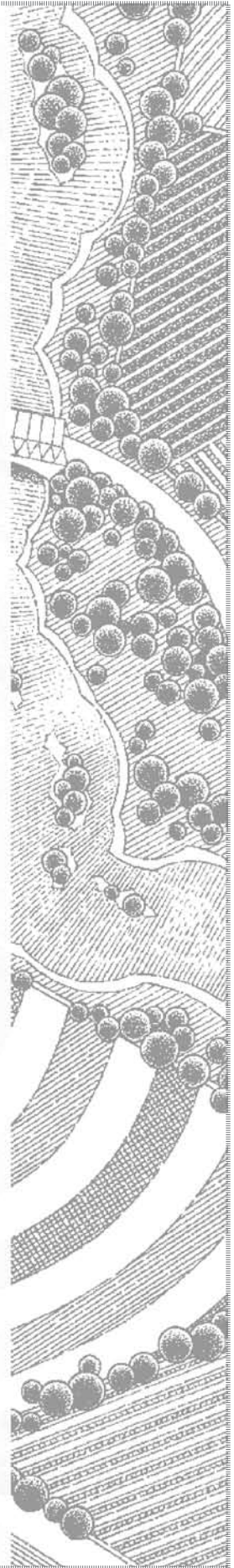
Offer information for customers at the market's information table that tells the story of the market, something about the vendors, when products are in season, and the times and locations of the area's markets and include the market's logo.

- "We developed a 'Friends of the Market' map. It identifies libraries, schools, phone booths, parks, and—for a fee—merchant sites posted on the map. We distributed 5,000 of the maps and had twenty-four ads on the first map at \$35 each. Be sure to have the merchants proofread the map to be sure their locations are correctly identified. List town events as well as the market's yearly activities on the back of the map. Since the maps can be used as restaurant placemats, they were distributed free to restaurants that were glad to put them on the tables for a captive audience!"

– Grace Richards, Arlington Farmer's Market, Washington

### Community Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards can be found at the grocery store, places of worship, health clubs, schools and universities, parks, and apartment buildings. Some market managers find that a grassroots approach to advertising, which reaches customers more directly (including direct mail and flyers) is more effective than the traditional media route of newspaper ads.





- “We have been utilizing flyers, direct mail pieces, and less standard media advertising such as print ads. Market managers are trying to reach the customer directly, like doing direct mailings or putting flyers, brochures, and posters on community bulletin boards and literature tables at churches or other community outlets. This seems to be most effective. Traditional advertising has not had the response that the managers would like for the dollars spent.”

– Jeff Cole, Massachusetts Federation of Farmer’s Markets

### Television

Since people sometimes mute television advertisements, follow the visuals with the market’s logo, location, and hours of operation in print on the screen. Rates vary widely depending on television ratings, whether the camera crew is unionized, and how the station responds to your request. You may have to pay for editing, voiceovers, scripting, and other costs of production. Advertising costs less on cable television but that is because many cable viewers continually flip through the channels and the station cannot guarantee a numbers for viewers.

- “Television provides spectacular visual impact because of the sharp contrast between the colors of fresh vegetables. We use television to increase the customer base late in the season. Purchase the best times on your best station. It works. Cost: One thirty-second spot on the ten o’clock news cost us \$95. Other decent times were about \$50 each.”

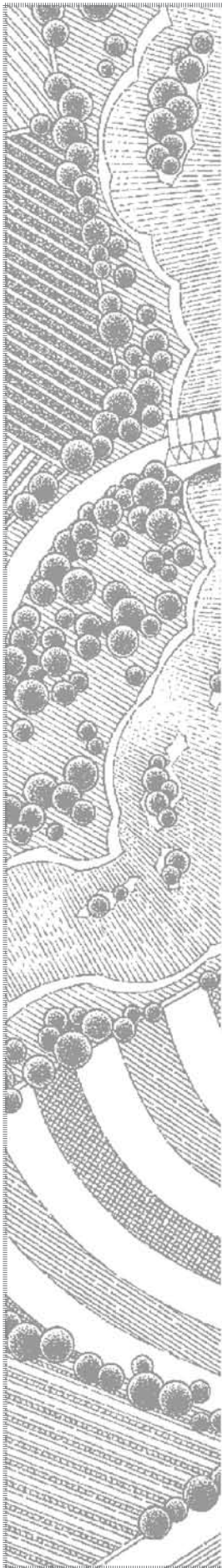
– Dan Haakenson, *The Small Commercial Grower*

- “Most of the association’s advertising dollars are going into television ads. Television just seems to have the greatest reach; it has more ‘eyes.’ Advertisements are placed on local stations and mainly in the news slots, such as the six a.m. morning news, as well as a few women-oriented programs during the day. Ads are run two weeks on and two weeks off to maximize dollars. It costs \$250 per commercial for a prime time six p.m. spot, but it is worth it! People watch the news, and they know our commercials. Many markets would probably balk at spending \$250 for a thirty-second ad, but we found it works. You can spend \$250 on a newspaper ad and not see any difference in the market.”

– Mark Sheridan, *Santa Barbara Farmers Market Association, California*

### Promotions and Special Events

A promotion is an event or activity organized by a farmer’s market that is usually held during the market and is designed to raise consumer awareness and attract customers. Special events add interest to a farmers market. They provide opportunities to



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diversify the market's offerings in terms of entertainment, education, and service. Special events are a way to promote the market, benefit the community, and celebrate accomplishments. A special event serves a promotional purpose when the manager uses it to generate publicity for the market through media relations, press releases, and/or advertising.

Special events include a wide variety of activities that range from low-effort, minor activities such as a weekly raffle for a basket of produce to complex, highly organized annual events such as an anniversary celebration or harvest festival.

### Some Themes for Special Events

- ▣ Anniversary
- ▣ Annual opening and closing days
- ▣ Seasonal themes
- ▣ Crop-specific themes that focus on preparing and tasting produce
- ▣ Holiday events
- ▣ Cultural events
- ▣ Benefits and fundraisers for the market or other supporting community organizations

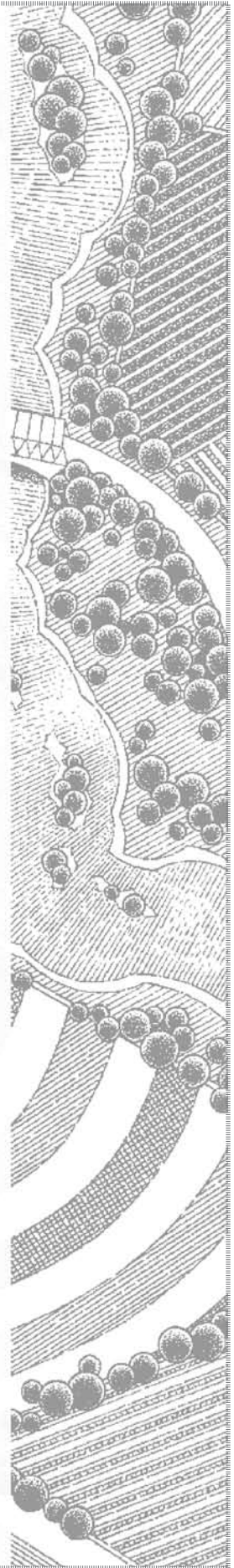


### Activities That Might Be Included in a Special Event

- ▣ Live music/dancing
- ▣ Raffles
- ▣ Contests
- ▣ Lectures or demonstrations
- ▣ Hands-on activities
- ▣ Tastings
- ▣ Information booths
- ▣ Craft sales
- ▣ Games and contests for kids

Regularly scheduled and annual events help to build customers' familiarity, which can eventually evolve into a tradition and nostalgia. Some markets, such as the Dupont Circle Freshfarm Market in Washington, D.C., managed by American Farmland Trust, offer special events that follow a monthly schedule such as:

- ▣ Chef at Market: First and third Sundays
- ▣ Market Demo: Second Sunday
- ▣ Activist Day: Third Sunday
- ▣ Kids' Activity: Fourth Sunday
- ▣ Market Tours: Last Sunday of the month





A regular schedule simplifies planning and logistics. Whether your market develops a regular event schedule or not, planning in advance helps both the market and its customers. Small-scale activities may require only a few weeks of preparation, while larger events can take months to plan. A calendar of events, actively promoted to customers and the media, can build customer and media awareness and generate both new business and publicity for the market. Publish your calendar on a market website and develop contacts with other organizations that will post links to your website or add your calendar to their sites. Send a press release and, if possible, follow up with phone calls to media contacts before special events.

Planning special events involves awareness of:

- Your budget, costs, and expenses.
- Equipment needs (e.g., sound system).
- Need for additional help and volunteers.
- Any special permits or licenses needed.
- Insurance concerns.
- Announcements and press releases.
- Crowd control.
- Clean-up.
- Any follow-up needed (e.g., equipment returns, thank-you notes, paying bills).

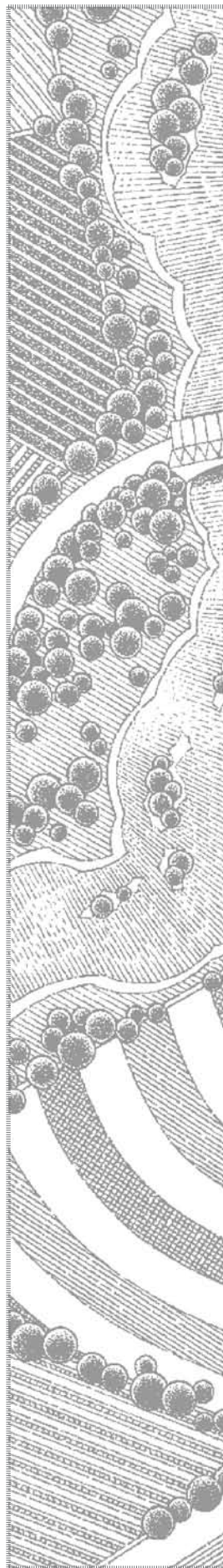


### Collaborating with Other Organizations on Special Events and Promotions

The potential of special events to promote the market and bring in new customers can be increased by effective collaboration with other organizations. For example, a local Slow Food organization could organize a tasting or demonstration at the market. A local school could hold a concert there or the market can serve as the backdrop for a local charitable organization's fundraising raffle. With clear communication and division of responsibilities, collaborative events can increase the number of new customers attracted to the market.

### Generating Publicity for the Market

Publicity is free media coverage that raises awareness of the farmers market and its goals and attracts more customers. The book *New Farmers Market* (by Vance Corum and Marcie Rosenzweig and published by New World Publishing, Auburn, California) suggests compiling a media list of reporters and editors who have been or are likely interested in stories and events at the market. Remember to include food editors from local and regional papers. Learn to tailor your stories for different sec-



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tions of the paper. The business page would carry a story about using the market as a vehicle for small business development while the food section would be more interested in a tomato tasting event or a cooking demonstration.

### Conclusion

Strategic marketing will always include some publicity, advertising, and promotional activities. The activities you choose should support your market's vision and mission and reach the customers you want to bring to the market. When customers come to the market, you can build loyalty through attention to positive customer relations and entice them to spend more with attention to product development and merchandising and improvements to product mix and quality. These issues are addressed in subsequent chapters.

