

Farmers Market Management Skills



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The Farmers Market Management Series • Volume 2

Farmers Market Management Skills

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Introduction

This book is part of a series presented by the University of California Small Farm Center to support the professional development of farmers market managers.

Since the 1970s farmers markets have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, and in that time they have come to once again play an important role in the economic viability of small-scale farmers. The success of any market, and the financial success of participating farmers, depends to a great extent on the skills and abilities of the manager of the market. In the first volume of this series, we introduced you to the process of starting a farmers market. In this volume, we outline and describe ways to build necessary management skills. The third volume is devoted to strategic growth and marketing.

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Gain an overview of the contents of this volume.
- ▶ Understand the organization of chapters and contents.
- ▶ See how the layout is designed to support your skill development.

What is a Manager?

Managers can be described as catalysts. As the manager of a farmers market, you are responsible for making things happen. You organize, you plan, you promote. You are also responsible for managing people. You communicate, you delegate, you resolve conflicts.

Being a manager means that you must know both the “what” and the “how.” The “what” refers to the vision and direction of your organization. What you do, what you represent, what you plan to do in the future. The “how” is the collective myriad of details that helps you, and the people you work with, accomplish your goals and objectives. How you organize the vendors, how you promote the market, how you communicate with the people around you. As a manager you have to be able to see the forest and the trees.

Your task is not an easy one. Count the number of really great managers you have had in the past. Now think about how many bad managers you have had. Chances are the bad managers outnumber the great ones. Being a good manager requires not only strong organizational and planning skills but also the ability to work well with others and develop productive relationships with a wide variety of people.

If you are new at managing, take some time to look around you and understand how things work. Who makes decisions? Who do people respect and why? What are the underlying tensions? How do things actually get done? You may be full of

energy and ideas that make you want to jump in head first to begin doing your job, but it will pay off in the long run if you take the time to more fully assess the situation. Talk to vendors, customers, and former managers, if possible, about the history of the market. This will signal to others who have been around longer than you that you are aware of and respect what has come before you. Once you have a solid grasp of what you have gotten yourself into, you can be more active in branding the market with your unique personality and leadership.

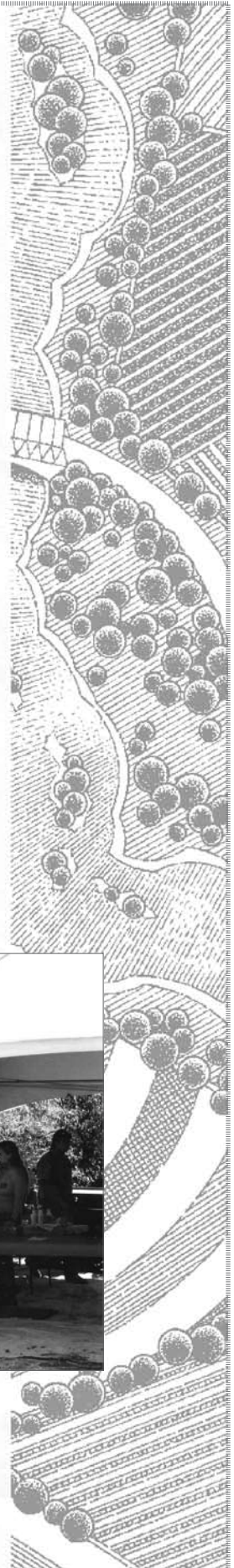
How to Use This Book

In addition to observation, there are other tools to help you be succeed in managing your market, and this book is designed to be one of those tools. This volume is divided into three sections. The first introduces you to the roles and responsibilities of the manager. Chapter Two describes the manager's roles as visionary and leader. Chapter Three describes the sometimes overlapping roles of analyst, goal-setter, decision-maker, communicator, and evaluator. No manager plays all roles at every moment, but at different times you may be called upon to play each of the roles described in Chapters Two and Three.

The second section of this book, covering Chapters Four through Eight, is dedicated to relationship-building. Chapters Four and Five discuss the relationship between the manager and the board of directors and how to strengthen the board. Chapters Six and Seven describe ways to maintain positive relationships and, when necessary, manage conflict with vendors. And Chapter Eight outlines ways to maintain and improve customer relations.

The third section of the book discusses specific skills involved in carrying out the roles and responsibilities of the manager and in building and maintaining positive relationships with all those involved in the farmers market.

It is unlikely that any manager will need every chapter of this book. As you read through this introductory chapter, consider which ones seem familiar and which may contain new information. Think about your interactions with others—what areas cause you concern or problems? What



Manager Responsibility Matrix

The manager coordinates and oversees ongoing functioning of the market.

The manager envisions and plans for the future of the market.

Objectives

To ensure that, as a venue for the sale of farmers' products, the market functions smoothly and effectively.

To ensure the sustainability and viability of the market.

Responsibilities

Analyzing: Analyze situations to identify problem areas and opportunities for improvement.

Decision-making: Make timely, well-informed decisions with fairness and the best interests of the market in mind.

Goal-setting: Set realistic, achievable, measurable goals for the market.

Organizing: Organize own time, work space, market activities, and personnel.

Planning: Plan each season's market activities, including special events, advertising, and meetings.

Budgeting: Work with the board to develop and manage a reasonable budget based on short-term goals and activities.

Implementing: Implement actions collectively chosen or individually as appropriate.

Monitoring: Monitor progress on projects and activities and provide appropriate feedback.

Evaluating: Evaluate the level of achievement and performance of changes in the system.

Problem-solving: Identify, analyze, and propose solutions for problems.

Communicating: Communicate effectively with various constituencies of the market—vendors, customers, regulators, public officials, the media, the community at large, and the board of directors.

Managing conflict: Effectively manage conflict that arises among vendors, consumers, the staff, volunteers, and board members.

Delegating: Delegate tasks that can be accomplished by others.

Long-range planning: Periodically engage the board to develop and revise long-range strategic plans to position or reposition the market to access emerging opportunities or confront threats to its sustainability.

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issues keep you awake at night? The answers to these questions can tell you where to begin. Alternately, you may want to start with something that seems familiar, hone your skills, and continue to improve on your strengths.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction and outlines the skills and abilities the chapter is designed to develop. By looking at the learning objectives for the chapter, you can assess your need for the contents. You may return again and again to certain chapters and skip others completely. While the skills, abilities, and relationships discussed in this book are complex and interwoven, you may already have many of the necessary qualities and skills.

Two of the most important sources of learning for managers are on-the-job experience and discussions with colleagues. We encourage you to read this book with your actual experiences in mind and to find colleagues with whom and from whom you can learn.

