



Marketing With a Farm Website

Identify Your Market

Promote & Cultivate Your Market

***Rural Roots Workshop: Taking Your Sales to the Next Level
March 30, 2007***

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1. Overview of SkyLines Farm

- About 65 acres near Potlatch, ID, cross-fenced to 15+ paddocks for intensive rotational grazing.
- Managing the farm and the sheep by organic methods (not certified) since 1992.
- Breeding 70+ Romney and Romney-cross ewes.
- Breeding and training Great Pyrenees livestock guardian dogs

- Direct-selling five products via **www.skylinesfarm.com**
 - 1 - Premium natural-colored & white wool fleeces and processed wool for handspinners
 - 2 - Organically raised, grassfed freezer (locker) lamb
 - 3 - Great Pyrenees livestock guardian dogs for predator-friendly flock protection
 - 4 - Purebred Romney and crossbred sheep breeding stock
 - 5 - Educational Opportunities for shepherds (apprenticeships, workshops)
 - (6 - Coming Soon) Educational products for shepherds...
Audio and video tapes of workshops, printed reference materials such as organic parasite control, lambing management, training livestock guardian dogs, etc.

2. Research & Identify the Target Market

- Search Internet for farm websites. Study them for product, pricing, marketing info and best/worst sales strategies. Purchase products from these sites to evaluate their sales process.
- Talk with anybody who might have insight into the market...other shepherds, veterinarians, sheep shearers, crafters, spinners, weavers.
- Search libraries and Internet for information on the general topics of sheep, wool, crafts, organically raised meat and fibers, prices and strategies for marketing commodity products vs directed-marketed products.

- Join online listserves & chat groups discussing wool and other natural fibers, marketing, knitting, weaving, crafts, sheep production, organic farming. Lurk and learn, post questions.
- Subscribe to pertinent publications (Spin Off, Sheep magazine, etc.) to learn what potential customers are reading and thinking about. What are their concerns?
- Attend fiber and sheep shows, talk to breeders and vendors, analyze their sales techniques & displays, network with other attendees.
- Conduct a market test in first year of production. Invite local spinners to first shearing day to purchase handspinning fleeces. They provided terrific feedback on my fleece types, quality, cleanliness, desirability, areas for improvement, etc. (Collect feedback for later use.)

3. SkyLines Target Market

Buyers who share my beliefs in sustainable agriculture and compassionate animal raising methods, and are willing to support a farmer who puts those beliefs into action...

- >> Handspinners who enjoy spinning Romney-type wools – both white and one-of-a-kind natural-colored.
- >> Consumers who appreciate the environmental, ethical, and health benefits of humanely and organically raised meat.
- >> Shepherds with similar low maintenance, organic, & grassfed production goals wishing to purchase breeding stock, and possibly utilizing livestock guardian dogs.
- >> New or existing shepherds seeking knowledge of organic production methods and/or hands-on experience.

The Ideal SkyLines Customer

- The customer is often a professional, or has enough disposable income to afford my higher-end (read sustainably priced) products.
- The customer is at least moderately computer literate. Must be comfortable researching, shopping for, and paying for products on the Internet. Sufficient writing skills and comfort level to conduct most or all of a transaction by email.

How to Appeal to the Ideal Customer

- Be Genuine! A rarity in the marketing world of hype and spin...
- Develop a clear, content-rich website that not only provides all pertinent info about the products, but also demonstrates breadth of knowledge and commitment to sustainable agriculture and compassionate animal care (also attractive to search engines).
- Provide enough background information that customer is ready to make the buying decision, or nearly so, when they make initial contact.

4. How I communicate my story and my products to my target customers. Brief tour SkyLines Farm website.

5. SkyLines Farm Marketing Strategy – reach the widest audience at the lowest cost!

- Minimal purchased print ads
- Free local and regional newspaper publicity
- Include web address on anything that carries my name – business card, print ads, the outline for this and every other talk I give, the sig line of every email I send.

- **“Work the Internet” regularly to promote and draw traffic to the website**
 - o Regular submissions to pertinent listserves and chat groups (subscribe to 20-25 groups at any one time). Sig line always includes web address.
 - o Periodically search for new directory sites and submit free to low-cost listings on sites such as Eatwild, Local Harvest, GreenPeople.
 - o Encourage (favorable) mentions of products on customers’ blogs.
 - o Sign up for Google alerts.
 - o Periodically visit search engine’s site and read their site submission guidelines to get an idea of how a site gets prominent ranking in their searches (this week anyway).
 - o Test Pay per Click and Sponsored Searches.
 - o Continually add new, useful content to website ***Very important to search engines.

6. Cultivating the Market – Keeping the Customers Once You Find Them

- Find a way to communicate regularly with your customers, and keep your name in the forefront of their minds. You might develop a small e-newsletter (or just an email) that you send to your customer list periodically. Try to draw them into your website if possible, and provide new, useful content once they get there. One technique I use is the Photo of the Day.

- With online sales, **Impeccable Customer Service** is even more critical than it is with face-to-face sales. Online buyers are making a leap of faith by doing business with you. They’re accustomed to being treated with a high level of professionalism by online sellers (ala Amazon.com and many more), and they expect (or hope for) the same from you. Don’t let them down, and you’ll build a high level of trust.

Selected Resources

Online

Helpful sites for online marketers

- <http://www.freewebs.com>
- <http://yahoo.com>
- <http://www.paypal.com>
- <http://searchenginewatch.com/webmasters>
- <http://www.google.com/webmasters>
- <http://www.consumersearch.com/www/software/web-design-software/review.html>.

This is good article discussing the major web design programs

Directories connecting consumers with organic/sustainable farmers

- <http://www.localharvest.org>
- <http://www.eatwild.com> (Jo Robinson’s clearinghouse of information about the benefits of grassfed meat for us, our animals, and our farms, plus a farm locator)
- <http://www.allorganiclinks.com>
- <http://GreenPeople.org>
- <http://www.newfarm.org>
- <http://www.inlandnwfarmersmarket.com>

My favorite web design book

- Don’t Make Me Think! Steve Krug (Fabulous! A must-read before designing or revamping your site!)