SESSION 2: Customers, Competition & Branding

Presented by Myrna Greenfield, Good Egg Marketing & Rio Grande Colonias USDA Regional Food Business Center

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Agenda:
Customers, Competition, & Branding

1. Know Your Customers
2. Customer Profile Exercise
3. Know Your Peers/ Competitors
4. Peer/ Competitor Exercise
5. Shaping Brand Perceptions
6. Branding Exercise

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CUSTOMER RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS:
Know Your Customers

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Your Business and Ideal Customers Are a Good Match



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Two Types of Customers, Two Types of Information

Direct Consumers: Shoppers/Eaters



Typical Direct Consumers

Your Current Direct Consumers

Retail/Wholesale/Food Service: Buyers, Owners & Intermediaries



Typical Buyers in Your Channels

Your Current Buyers In Your Channels

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Start With Existing Research in Your Category

- Retail, wholesale, and food service buyers; owners; and intermediaries have diverse buying criteria.
- Research about the B2B buying process is less plentiful than B2C.
- Search for profiles of the types of buyers you want to reach, such as “A Day in the Life of a retail food buyer.”



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RESEARCHING WHOLESALE BUYERS

Conduct Your Own Research

- What's their purchasing process?
- Do they conduct regular reviews in your category? If so, when?
- What motivates them (as buyers and people)?
- What pressures are they under?
- What's the best way/time to contact them?



How to Research: Talk to buyers at trade shows; attend local/regional food conferences and table-top events; stop by stores/restaurants with samples; ask your peers; attend industry association events.

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HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR SHOPPERS/EATERS

Start With Existing Research in Your Category



- Look for demographic and psychographic data:
  - Age, sex, life stage, family size, education level, location, values, beliefs, interests.
- What % of the population buys/uses this offering?
  - How often do they buy? When and how do they use it?
- Are they brand loyal? Price sensitive?
- What features and benefits are important to them?
- What problems/wants/needs does it fill?
- What are the best ways to reach them?

How to Research: Internet search and AI-assisted analysis: look for journalist, industry and market research reports.

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HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR OWN SHOPPERS/EATERS

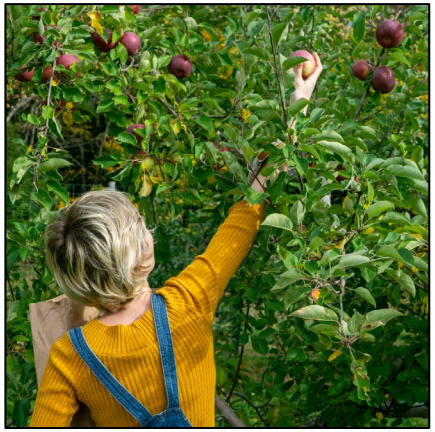
3 Types of Info to Seek



1. Who are they? **(Demographics)**



2. What do they care about? **(Needs, Wants, Values, Interests)**



3. What do they buy or do? **(Behavior)**

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HOW TO RESEARCH CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS

Collect/Observe Demographic Info



Demographics are statistical, objective characteristics of a population, such as age, sex, family size, and household income.

- Search online for census data for your target area.
- Ask customers for their zip code when they make a purchase.
- Observe customers to guesstimate age, life stage, family size, etc.*

** Be cautious about generalizing people by appearance.*

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HOW TO RESEARCH NEEDS, INTERESTS, VALUES

Look for Shared Needs, Interests, Values

Needs

- Physical: Satisfy hunger, thirst, improve health
- Enjoy taste, smells, beauty, and variety
- Emotional: Feel connected, recognized, admired

Interests

- Cooking, gardening, nature, hiking, fitness
- Meeting new people, having new experiences

Values

- Support farmers, local economy, the environment



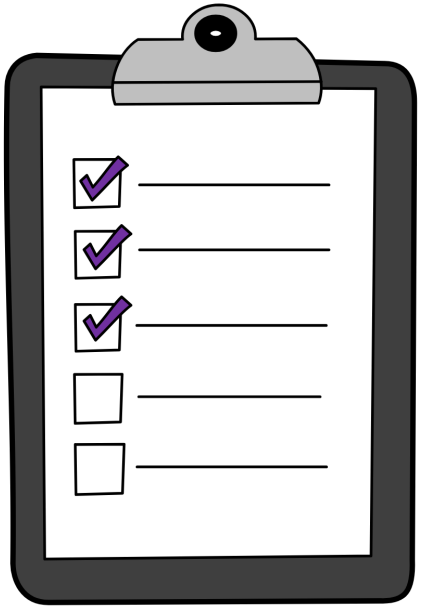
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RESEARCHING NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND VALUES

Social Media Scans, Chats, Surveys



- Scan social media reviews and comments for compliments and complaints.
- If chatting during customer checkout or other times, ask if they're looking forward to anything soon. This often reveals interests and motivations.
- Free tools make it easy to create online surveys. Even a few responses can yield useful feedback.

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RESEARCHING NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND VALUES

Set Up a “Dot” Survey

- Attach paper to 4 easels. Write 1 question at the top of each easel.
- Assign color-coded dots to customer segments (e.g., people in zip code A get yellow dots, in zip code B get red dots).
- Ask participants to place their dot in the appropriate section on each easel.
- Reward participants with a coupon or raffle.



Photo courtesy of USDA Agricultural Research Service.
“Results of Dot Survey USDA Outdoor Farmers Market” .

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HOW TO RESEARCH NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND VALUES

1-to-1 Interviews and Focus Groups



- 1-to-1s and focus groups are structured conversations that seek to uncover true feelings or reactions to a product, idea, etc.
- They can surface honest feedback that casual chats and online surveys seldom do.
- 1-to-1s and groups are small, so you can't assume that comments represent the larger population. But the quality and depth of discussion can yield incredible insights.
- Feed and/or reward participants for their time to encourage turnout.

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HOW TO RESEARCH BEHAVIOR:

What Do Your Customers Do or Buy?

Use existing data to track visits, purchases, and other behavior

- Point of Sales data, sales records, CSA membership info, and loyalty programs*
- Social media engagement, email clicks
- QR codes
- Observations, in-person comments, and online comments and reviews.



**Respect privacy laws. Customers must "opt in" to share their personal info.*

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Consumer Profile for a Vegan Donut Company

(for internal use only!)

Bio: Female millennial urban professional, lives alone, seldom cooks

Pain point/problem to solve: Craves delicious, healthy snacks

Behavior/usage: Buys a donut for breakfast on the way to work

Why she buys from you: She likes your fast, tasty, guilt-free food. And she's not a vegan!



Donut Dolores

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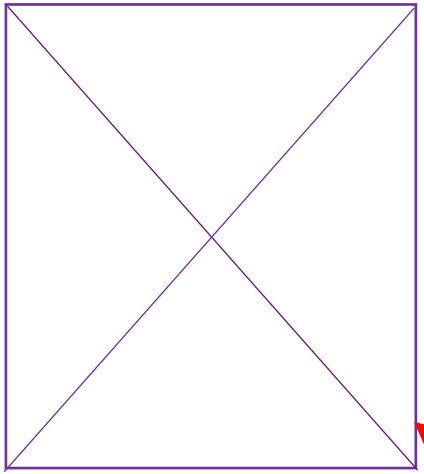
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Sample Consumer Profile

(for internal use only!)

Nickname → *Create a fun, descriptive, memorable name*



- **Bio:** Age, sex, life stage, location, etc.
- **Pain point/needs/wants/motivation:**
- **Product/service/experience they buy/use:**
- **Behavior/usage:**
- **Why they buy from you:**

Photo: Choose a free photo from the Internet that typifies this customer type. Do not use an actual customer photo!

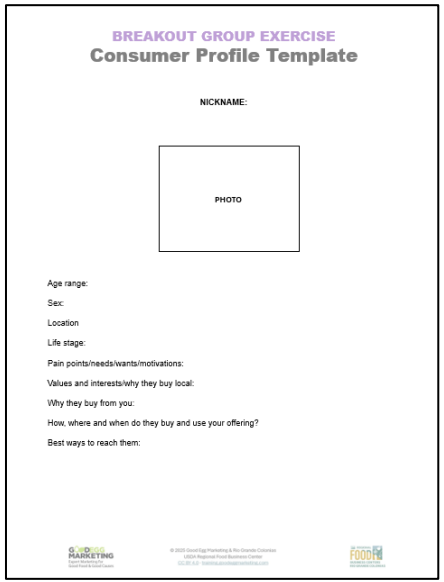
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BREAKOUT GROUP EXERCISE

Create a Consumer Profile


BREAKOUT GROUP EXERCISE

Consumer Profile Template

NICKNAME:

PHOTO

Age range:

Sex:

Location

Life stage:

Pain points/needs/wants/motivations:

Values and interests/why they buy local:

Why they buy from you:

How, where and when do they buy and use your offering?

Best ways to reach them:

Consumer Profile Template

- **Purpose:** Most businesses serve more than one type of customer. This exercise helps you learn how to describe customers who share similar behaviors and needs. This helps clients shape communications and promos that appeal to these customers.
- Decide which profile from the *Sample Consumer Profiles for Juan's Chipotle Beef Jerky* to use.
- Complete the *Consumer Profile Template.* Don't forget to make up a nickname!
- You have 10 minutes for the exercise.

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DISCUSS:

How could a client use the profile to create texts or promotions that appeal to this type of customer?

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PEER/COMPETITOR ANALYSIS:
Know Your Competition

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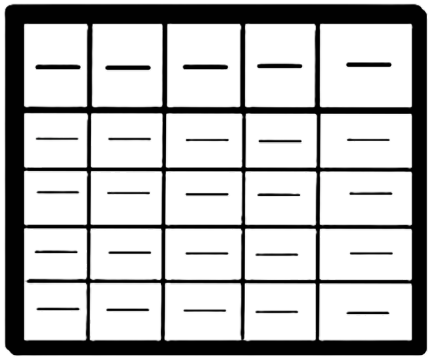
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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS RESEARCH

Identify the Offerings Most Likely to Attract Your Ideal Customers

- List the sales channels/locations that your ideal customers are likely to use.
- Identify the top 3-5 offerings that your ideal customers are likely to consider alongside yours.
- Gather info about the top 3-5 offerings and/or the top producers (features and benefits, ingredients, methodology, reputation, values, origin, etc.).



How to Research: User, journalist, and industry reviews; sales data; industry reports; company websites and social media.

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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS RESEARCH

Site Visits

- Visit stores, markets, cafes, etc. Note prices, displays, and consumer behavior.
- If it's a retail setting, note:
  - How many SKUs and facings does each offering have?
  - Who has the best placement (eye-level)?
  - Which offerings have shelf-talkers, digital coupons, or other promotions?



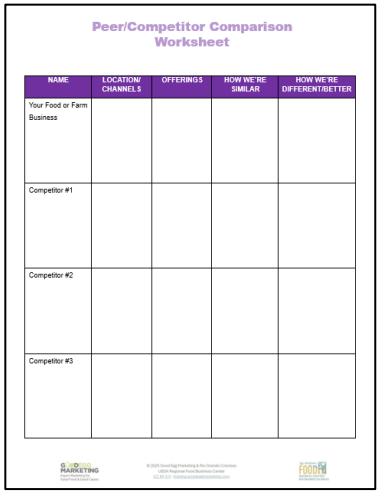
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SOLO EXERCISE

Create a Peer/Competitor Comparison Chart for Analysis


Peer/Competitor Comparison Worksheet

NAME	LOCATION/ CHANNELS	OFFERINGS	HOW WE'RE SIMILAR	HOW WE'RE DIFFERENT/BETTER
Your Food or Farm Business				
Competitor #1				
Competitor #2				
Competitor #3				

Peer/Competitor Comparison Worksheet

- **Purpose:** Understanding how your client is similar to and different from their peers/ competitors will help you identify how they can stand out from similar businesses.
- Open the *Sample Clients with Competitors for Competitive Analysis Exercise and choose one client.*
- Open and complete the *Peer/Competitor Comparison Worksheet*.
- 15-minute exercise

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DISCUSS:

If your client's offerings are similar to their peers, how can they differentiate their business?

BRANDING!

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Break Time!



See you in 15 minutes

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What is Branding?

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Which 3 words pop into your head when you see this logo?

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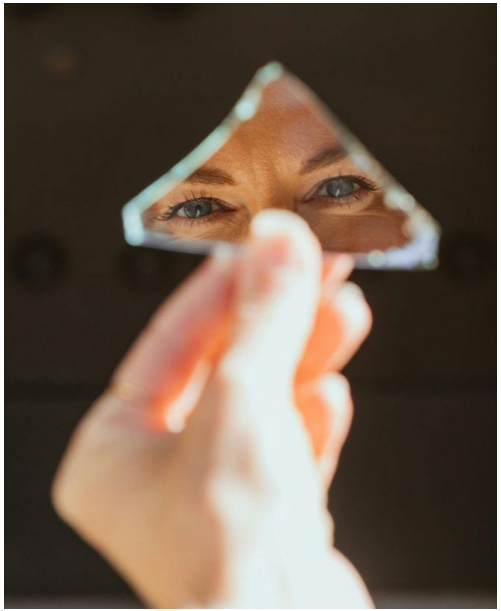
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Your Brand Exists in the Mind of the Beholder

- People form instant perceptions of your brand based on what they perceive or associate with your brand.
- Once established, it's difficult to change those perceptions.

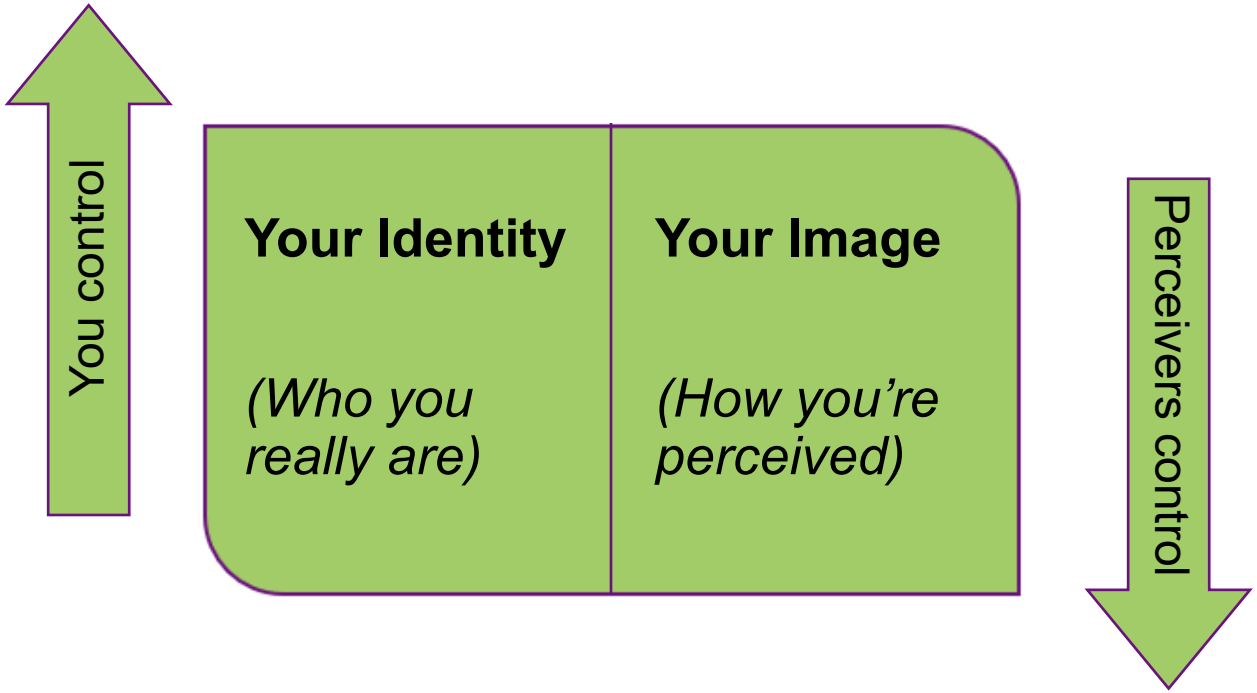


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You Can Try to Shape Your Brand, But You Can't Control It



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Every Point of Contact With Customers Shapes How They Perceive Your Brand



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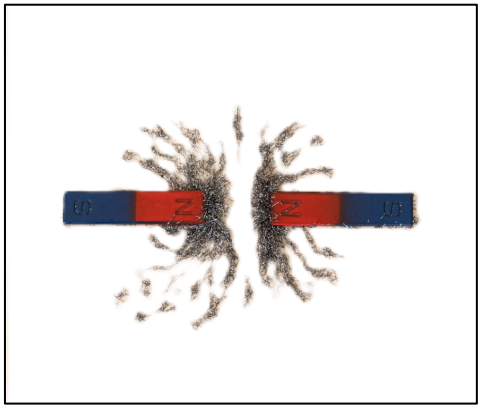
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Build Trust and Connection Through the “3Cs” of Branding







Clear

Consistent

Compelling
(to your target customers)

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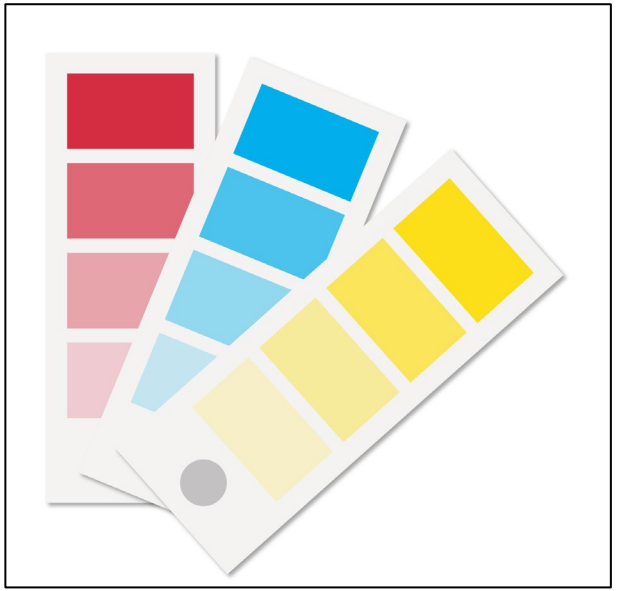
Shaping Basic Brand Elements

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Use Your Brand Elements to Generate a Positive Brand Image



- “Brand personality”
- Tone of voice
- Color palette/fonts
- Farm logo

Emotions get stimulated subconsciously. The right color palette can help generate the warm feelings you want customers to have about your brand.

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Brands Have a “Personality” Just Like People

Which words would you use to describe this family’s personality?



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What “Personality” Do You Want Your Brand to Emanate?

INCLUSIVE	EXCLUSIVE
FAMILY-FRIENDLY	YOUNG SINGLES
PLAYFUL	CLASSY
TRADITIONAL	EDGY

Your words, colors, images, and tone of voice should reflect a clear, consistent personality that’s likely to appeal to your ideal customers

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Tone of Voice

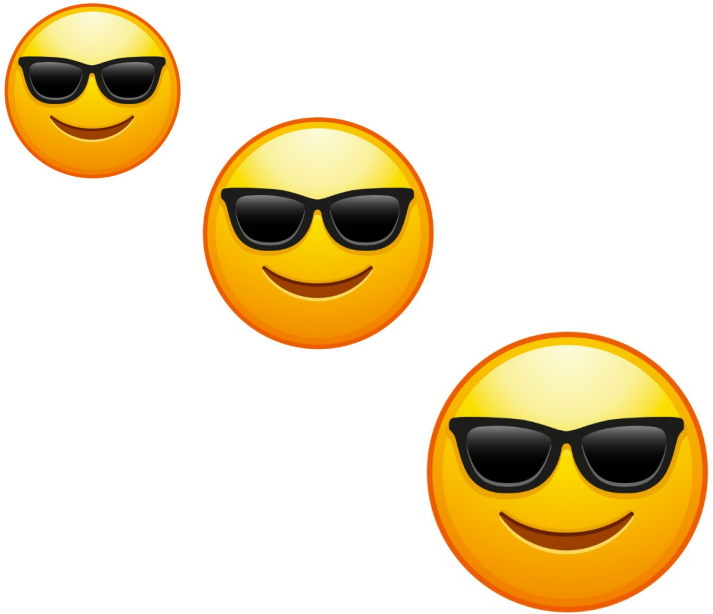


Photo courtesy of Red Fire Farm

- Every little thing, including your signage, reflects your tone of voice.
- Red Fire Farm in Granby, MA directs on-farm traffic using elegant, friendly signage that doesn't nag.

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Don’t Be Afraid to Throw Some Shade, If It’s On Brand



Everything you say or do should be consistent with your brand’s tone of voice

- Professional vs. casual
- Are cuss words allowed?
- Are you allowed to be funny?
- How many exclamation points are ok!!!
- How many emojis are too many?

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Anatomy of a Logo



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Associating Emotions With Your Brand

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We Don’t Crave “Products”-- We Crave the Feelings They Arouse

“They look happy. I’ll have what they’re having!”



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Customers Make Emotional Connections With Their Favorite Brands



Even an avocado can be huggable!

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Use Sight, Sound, Touch, Taste, and Smell To Generate Positive Brand Associations

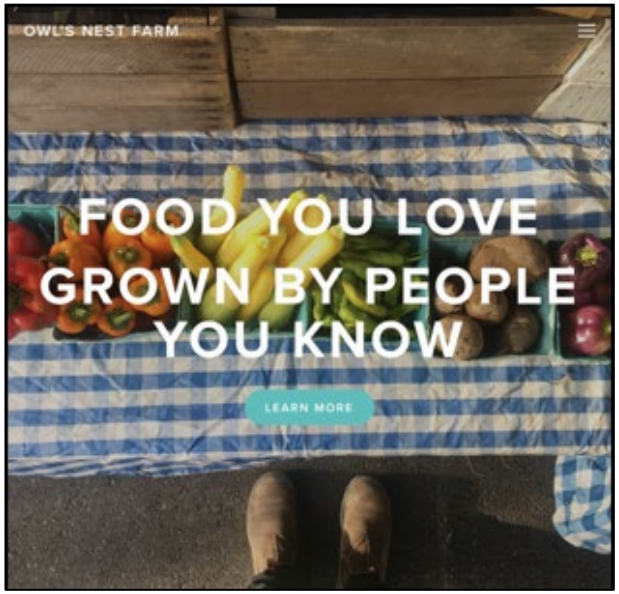


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Clarify Your Brand Identity



- Name
- Mission and values
- Descriptor and/or tagline
- “About” page and/or bio
- Short description or brand statement

Website homepage for Owl’s Nest Farm in Upper Marlboro, MD

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Symbols and Mascots Can Warm Up or Simplify A Complex Brand Identity



Can I be your spokescow?

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Define Your Brand Difference

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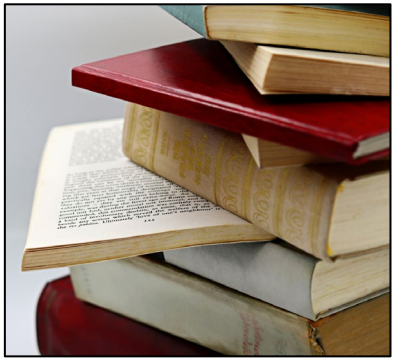
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Three Ways to Define Your Difference When You All Do The Same Thing



Your Niche



Your Story



Your Style

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DEFINE YOUR DIFFERENCE

Your Niche



The things you emphasize don't have to be unique to your farm; you just need to be really good at them!

- Your niche is the segment or category of the overall market that you occupy
- You may be quite similar to other farms in your niche; you're probably not unique!
- Emphasize anything special about the variety, quality, production methods, or availability of your offerings
- Promote the things you do best ***and*** that are important to your ideal customers

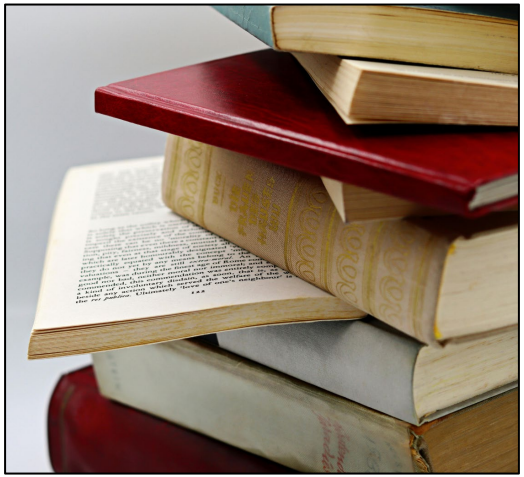
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DEFINE YOUR DIFFERENCE

Your Farm or Food Business Story



Your Story

- Your origin story: How your farm started, who was involved, and the challenges you've overcome
- Your purpose and values: Why you do what you do
- Your personal identity, background, history, and expertise: How do they affect how you do business?

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DEFINE YOUR DIFFERENCE

Create a Distinctive Style for Your Brand





Are you leopard skin stilettos or purple high-tops?

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Put It All Together

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How Do Customers Perceive Your Brand: Does It Match Your Identity?



- Ask customers which 3 words they'd use to describe you if you were a person.
- Do they match what you'd say? Great!
- If not, define your difference and use the 3 Cs (clear, consistent, and compelling) and brand elements to stand out.

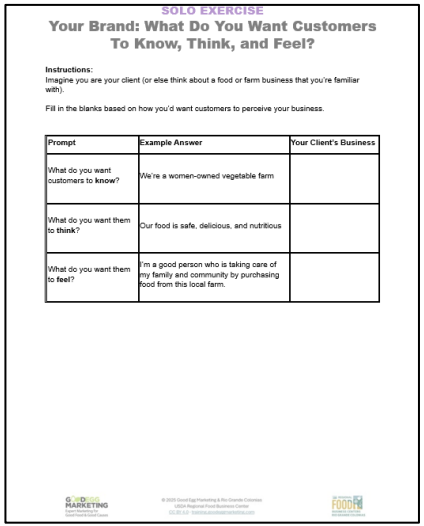
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SOLO EXERCISE:

Your Brand: What Do You Want Customers to Know, Think, and Feel?



SOLO EXERCISE

Your Brand: What Do You Want Customers To Know, Think, and Feel?

Instructions:
Imagine you are your client (or else think about a food or farm business that you're familiar with).

Fill in the blanks based on how you'd want customers to perceive your business.

Prompt	Example Answer	Your Client's Business
What do you want customers to **know**?	We're a women-owned vegetable farm	
What do you want them to **think**?	Our food is safe, delicious, and nutritious	
What do you want them to **feel**?	I'm a good person who is taking care of my family and community by purchasing food from this local farm.	

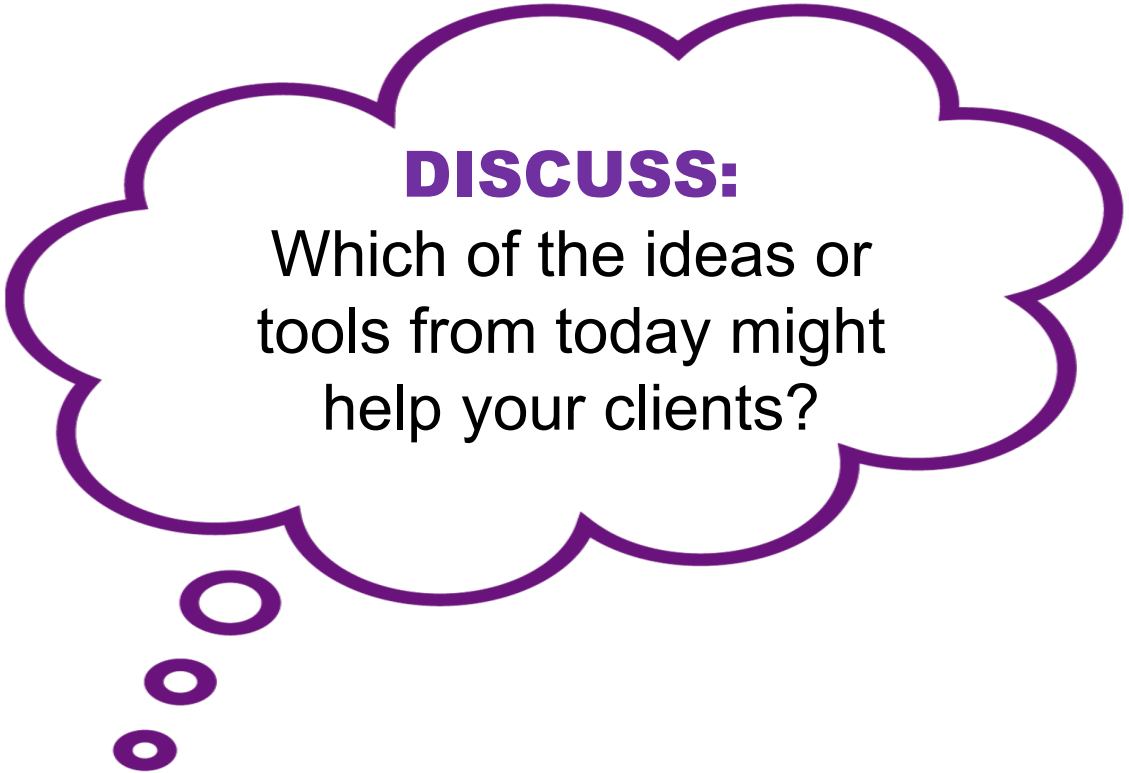
Your Brand Worksheet

- **Purpose:** Help your client identify what they want customers to know, think, and feel about their brand. This will help them basic brand elements likely to create the desired perception.
- Open and complete the *Your Brand: What Do You Want Customers To Know, Think, and Feel?* worksheet.
- You have 10 minutes to complete the exercise before returning to the group.

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