

27 March 2018

To all SAGE Farmers Market Stall Holders

SFM 2018 Marketing & Media Strategy

Thank you to those of you who could stay back to celebrate our 5th birthday last week, under less than pleasant conditions! Due to the low number of stall holders present, I suggested to Stuart that we defer the discussion about the committee's marketing plans, but we sort of ended up discussing it anyway.

Something like this is much better to explain in person, but we recognise how difficult it is to stay around after a market. So I will give it a go in writing for stall holders who couldn't stay back last week.

Preamble

The committee recognises that there is more we can do to better promote the market. With recent changes to stall holders – losing some, gaining others – there is a greater need to increase the market's exposure.

When the committee discussed this, we recognised the following:

1. We have no budget for paid advertising, but we have significant doubts that paid advertising provides a return on investment that justifies the expense anyway.
2. We believe that we already have the necessary tools available and that all that remains is to use them better. These include social media and the e-market, which we believe we have been undervaluing.
3. We are proposing a media and marketing strategy based on the principle of "*shared responsibility*".

By shared responsibility, we mean that the market is more than just one entity. It is a collective of around 25 or so individual businesses who should all already be executing their own marketing strategies. These strategies should include promoting their involvement with the market.

Firstly, through social media

By mentioning the market in your own social media posts, you help us promote the market generally. Additionally, that signals me to amplify your social media promotions by resharing or reposting.

A few of you are doing this already, but there is a lot of room for us to improve our efforts for greater impact. And I can't keep trotting out the same stall holders all the time. It needs to include everyone.

I have met with Sarah Cooper in business development at Council about holding a free digital marketing workshop that is tailored just for stall holders of the market. Whether you're already using social media or you don't want to use it at all (you can plug into the market's by working with me), you can still benefit from attending. It will really help us all get a handle on where we're all at and how we can better work together.

It will cover the basics, but more importantly, it will lay out a clear picture of how we can all work together to build the overall exposure of the market and each other's businesses.

Before you say you don't have time to do all this online stuff, another focus of the workshop will be to show you how to structure your digital marketing work so you only have to spend a limited amount of time once a week *at the most* to plan and setup your activities for the rest of the week. This is not about trying to get you to spend hours a day on your phones. It is about helping you to use the tools available to us all at no cost and for the benefit of everyone.

We want to schedule this workshop at a time and time of year to give everyone the best chance of attending, which is pretty obviously winter, but I will be asking everyone to give me an indication of when they can come to this workshop.

Secondly, through the e-market

The second promotional vehicle available to us that we are underutilising is the e-market. We've been running the e-market for over 3 years now, which gives us a pretty good understanding of what makes it work well and what makes it flag.

Basically, products is what makes it work. Choice. There is a sweet spot of around 50 products (whatever they may be, but having a good mix is obviously more ideal) that leads to good sales. Below 50 products and it's barely worth running, as sales drop.

No other farmers market in Australia offers this service. It really puts our market on the map as one of the benchmark markets.

The number of products can easily drop below 50 if one stall holder takes a week off. So, for the next six months at least, *the committee is requiring all stall holders to make at least one product available on the e-market.*

Currently around 14 stall holders use the e-market, but there are around another 14 stall holders who will need to be added. For some, this will be a simple process, for others it will be a little more involved.

The e-market should be considered a part of your market involvement. It has the potential to reach more customers on the fringe of buying local food who need some nudging to convert them and we are not currently making the most of it.

We have seen solid growth in e-market trade, but after three years, its potential has still not been tapped and until all stall holders recognise the e-market as a regular aspect of their participation in the market overall and not just an optional extra, it won't reach as far as it should.

I will work with each of you individually to get this happening over the next few weeks. I will also conduct a training session for those who need it, as there is also a shared responsibility with making the e-market function each week.

Stay tuned for a day and time for the training session. I'll let you know.

I think that about covers it. Please feel free to discuss any of this with me or any of the committee members (Kirsti is currently the stall holder representative). It sounds like a big commitment, but the time consuming work is in getting set up and adjusting to the new practises, ie. temporary. After that, a small effort from everyone will bring results greater than the sum of their parts.

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