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## Planning a Successful Direct Mail Campaign

Direct mail can be an effective way to target a specific group of customers with advertising flyers, brochures, postcards, specials, price lists and countless other types of promotional materials. As with all promotional strategies, careful planning and implementation are important.

Although a number of factors are critical to implementing a successful direct mail campaign, the single most critical factor is having an accurate and well-targeted mailing list. One simple and inexpensive way to generate a mailing list is to collect basic information from customers (name, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number and e-mail address). You may be able to do this by using a guest book or by assigning an employee to collect information from visitors as they enter or exit your enterprise.

Other methods to obtain mailing lists do exist but are often less effective and more expensive than developing your own list from customers. Mailing lists can be obtained through list brokers, organization membership lists, news articles, magazines, trade lists and show exhibitor lists. You may also be able to work with your post office to deliver a mailing to each residence in a specified area. Choose a method that will allow you to reach your target audience. Response rates for residential mailings are often only one in 1,000, while responses to a target-customer list may be more than three per 100.

Besides the careful compilation or selection of a mailing list, a number of other factors can significantly impact the success of your direct mail campaign. The basic elements to consider are

- The product and/or service offer

- Presentation of the offer
- Envelope considerations
- Mailing considerations

**Product and/or service offer.** The focus of the mailing should be a product/service offer that must somehow appeal to potential consumers and entice them to visit your operation. The offer must convince them that you can provide a benefit they want and/or need.

**Presentation of the offer.** The presentation of the offer is critical to a successful mailing campaign since the recipient is not able to evaluate the product in a traditional manner (i.e., taste, touch, see or smell the product). Therefore, the presentation of your company and product/service is critical to build the customer's perception of your enterprise. (Continued on page 3.)

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## Tennessee Farmland Legacy Conference

Discover how to make your farm a lasting legacy at the upcoming **Tennessee Farmland Legacy Conference** on **October 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>** at **Montgomery Bell State Park** in Burns, Tennessee.

Farmers, landowners, and community leaders will have the opportunity to learn about protecting and growing today's farms for tomorrow's families and communities. Discussion topics will include property taxes, estate

planning, conservation easements as well as other agriculture and community issues affecting today's farmers.

Hosted by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, The Land Trust for Tennessee, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Cumberland Region Tomorrow, the conference will offer valuable

information for producers and community advisors.

Early registration is open now through September 22. The registration fee is \$25 for farmers and \$50 for others.

Registration and additional information are available on-line at <http://picktnproducts.state.tn.us/legacy/>



## Spotlight on Agritourism: Bradley's Kountry Acres

### Mike and Cathy Bradley Bradley's Kountry Acres and Greenhouse

Sumner County  
www.bradleykountryacres.com

#### *What products, services or attractions do you offer?*

Bradley's Kountry Acres and Greenhouse offers a variety of fruits, vegetables and plants from mid-April through the fall. Their season starts with seven acres of PYO and pre-picked strawberries and greenhouse tomatoes. Spring bedding plants including ferns and hanging baskets follow fresh from the greenhouse. In July, the Bradley's begin to offer PYO and pre-picked blackberries and peaches and an assortment of vegetables. Pumpkins, pansies and mums are available in September and October.

#### *How long have you been in business?*

The Bradley's started their venture into direct marketing and agritourism in 1996 with their first strawberry crop. In 1997, they added their first greenhouse.

#### *Why did you get into agritourism?*

The Bradley's owned and operated a Grade A dairy for more than 30 years. In 1996, they decided to sell the dairy herd and explore other farming enterprises.

Strawberries are Cathy's favorite fruit, and their son loved frozen strawberry jam. Cathy used to buy strawberries to fulfill their needs but decided to ask her husband to add a couple of rows of strawberries to their garden. Those couple of rows turned into seven acres and a PYO strawberry enterprise.

#### *What is unique about the operation?*

According to Cathy, the Bradley's are one of two

operations in their area who grow plasticulture strawberries. "People seem to like the berries grown on plastic because the fruit is cleaner and a nice size," says Cathy.

#### *What are your goals for the operation?*

The Bradley's farm has been in Cathy's family since 1944. Farmland surrounding their operation is now growing more houses than crops, and Mike and Cathy want to see their land produce something to feed people. Cathy also hopes their customers have a better understanding of farm life and products that come from the farm by visiting their operation. "We want to let people see what it takes to grow food and hopefully they will appreciate what they go to the grocery store to buy."

#### *What have been your biggest challenges?*

"We were used to the dairy business where a truck came and took the milk away, and we got a check," says Cathy. "Learning how to push or market ourselves was hard in the beginning."

Currently the price of oil has greatly impacted prices for inputs such as fuel, fertilizer and plastic products. Cathy says they increased their pre-picked product prices this year and will likely have to increase PYO prices next year.

#### *How do you market your operation?*

Word of mouth is a valuable marketing tool for the Bradley's, although Cathy is quick to remind everyone that word-of-mouth "can hurt as well as help you."

Cathy and Mike also market their enterprise by placing banners along the highway, handing out business cards and recording a detailed message

on their answering machine. They are listed on the Pick Tennessee Products Web site, have joined the Tennessee Farm Fresh program and are members of the Portland Chamber of Commerce. The Bradley's also launched their own Web site recently.

The Bradley's also do a small amount of advertising in local newspapers, often to inform people of their spring open house.

#### *What advice do you have for other agritourism operators or farmers interested in agritourism?*

Cathy encourages farmers interested in agritourism to "do your homework. Visit other farms, talk to people to get their advice and learn from their experiences. Know what you are getting into before you take that jump. Even with doing this, you are still going to have surprises."

"When people see a parking lot full of cars, they see money rolling in. But they don't realize it is still a farming operation that is challenged by the weather, high [input] prices and labor requirements."



"We were used to the dairy business where a truck came and took the milk away, and we got a check," says Cathy. "Learning how to push or market ourselves was hard in the beginning."



## Direct Mail (Continued from page 1.)

The material should emphasize product and/or service benefits, be presented in a professional manner and clearly written so your potential customer can easily and fully understand your offer. Pictures of people enjoying activities at your enterprise are an effective way to help in the presentation of your offer.

### Envelope considerations.

The envelope (or outside of the direct mail piece if no envelope is used) should

look professional and avoid the appearance of junk mail to decrease the chances of having your mail tossed out unopened. Although the envelope should not look like junk mail, it should create some level of curiosity. If recipients are curious about the contents of the envelope, you increase the chances of them opening it. Hand writing the address on the envelope may arouse recipient curiosity.

### Mailing considerations.

First-class mail is less likely to be perceived as junk mail and is more reliable than bulk mail. The Direct Marketing Association estimates that anywhere from 5 percent to 15 percent of bulk mail is not successfully delivered. Check with your local branch of the United States Postal Service before designing your direct-mail piece. The post office has strict requirements for things like envelope dimensions, weight and acceptable address formats. In addition, you will want to

know postage costs before you produce your direct-mail item. The benefits and costs associated with both first-class and bulk mail need to be compared when deciding on a class of mail.

From *Agritourism in Focus* pages 123-124 available on-line at [http://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1754\\_app.pdf](http://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1754_app.pdf)

## Resource Review: New On-line Directory

Farmers interested in enhancing their bottom line have a new tool. Courtesy of the University of Tennessee, a new online directory catalogs resources available to help producers with their value-added enterprises, like agritourism or selling finished products such as salsa along with the produce.

A product of the Tennessee Value-Added Agriculture Priority Program, the new directory provides information in these topic areas: livestock, wood and forestry, farmers markets, agritourism, marketing, farm

waste, funding and fruits and vegetables. Additional topics that are expected in the future include getting started in value-added agriculture, business planning, bottled water and wine and winery development.

This website provides producers who are interested in adding value to their current farming activities with a wealth of information on a variety of topics, all in one place. It makes it easier and less time consuming to research the options and avenues that are available to them

through value-added agriculture.

The Tennessee Value-Added Agriculture Priority Program is an effort spearheaded by the UT Center for Profitable Agriculture.

The online resource guide can be accessed through the Tennessee Value-Added Priority Teams website: <http://valueaddedag.tennessee.edu>. Site visitors are invited to check the site often as information will be added and updated.

<http://valueaddedag.tennessee.edu>

## Upcoming Events

### Tennessee Agritourism Association Meeting

September 2, 2008; 11a.m.  
Cumberland Mountain State Park, Crossville, TN  
<http://state.tn.us/environment/parks/CumberlandMtn/>

Dutch Treat Lunch Buffet \$8

Contact Vera Ann Myers for more information at [veraannm@comcast.net](mailto:veraannm@comcast.net)

### Tennessee Farmland Legacy Conference

October 9-10, 2008  
Montgomery Bell State Park  
<http://picktnproducts.state.tn.us/legacy/>

### Agritourism Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference

January 26-27, 2009  
Chattanooga, TN

### Farmers Market Forum and Tennessee Horticulture Expo

January 29-31, 2009  
Nashville Airport Marriott

### 2009 NAFDMA Conference

February 1-7, 2009  
Savannah, Georgia  
[www.nafdma.com](http://www.nafdma.com)

