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Marketing Your Commercial Kitchen

To sell any product, you need to describe and position it in the best possible light and find the best ways to get the word out. This factsheet will provide an overview of how to develop your message and reach your audience when marketing your commercial kitchen.

What are you selling?

Marketing works best when the idea is clear, the language used is down-to-earth and you anticipate and answer your customers' questions. One way to arrive at a clear idea about your kitchen's selling features is to put yourself in your customer's shoes by answering questions such as the following:

- Can I rent only the kitchen, or do I need to rent the full facility?
- How big is the facility, and what is the layout of the kitchen?
- Can you provide a floor plan?
- What equipment and wares are already supplied in the kitchen, and what I must provide?
- What are booking and cancellation timelines?
- What are the rental rates?
- Are there discounts for specific groups?

What makes your kitchen or facility unique?

To sell the facility, think about going beyond simply listing its attributes. Focus on the benefits the renter will receive from your kitchen and facility or reasons why your facility is better than other facilities they could choose.

- Is it in a beautiful location (such as next to a golf course or lake) so that it would appeal to wedding planners?
- Is it close to a larger center and thus convenient for people to travel to?
- Is the kitchen modern, with specialized equipment that would allow you to promote it to food service companies?
- Are additional services available for hire? For example, do you have catering staff or connections with outside food service providers if the customer needs this capacity?

*Do a preliminary marketing analysis,
so you are clear on how to market
your commercial kitchen*

Thinking outside the box

Great marketing delivers solutions for your customers. If your commercial kitchen can meet a special need in your area, and no one (but you) has thought about it, that is an innovative marketing hook.

Be willing to take new or unusual approaches to your marketing efforts.

Here are a few examples of what is often called solution-based selling:

- Talk to a local caterer or small restaurateur about hosting a monthly gathering in your facility where people can learn to make economical meals for themselves or their families.
- Contact local groups about programs that would benefit certain segments in your community, like having a local school or 4-H Club host cooking classes for teenagers.

How to get the word out

There are many ways to spread the word about your kitchen. Whether you have a large or small marketing budget, these tactics can be tailored to fit your needs. Many methods need only your time, not your dollars.

When using online methods to communicate with your customers, it is very important to keep information up-to-date and to respond to inquiries and interact with your online followers.

Website

Mobile technology and access to the Internet have never been stronger. A website is an important marketing tool and one that can be easy to set up. There are many easy-to-publish website templates that give you a website presence quickly and economically (Internet search for “Top Website Builders” or “Free Website Templates”). Local web designers may provide this service for a fee.



Digital technology: a great tool to spread the word.
Brugman.ca web images used with permission. Brugman Food Equipment, Maple Ridge, BC

Local media

Local media like newspapers and radio stations provide paid advertising, which can be an effective way to reach local audiences. Local directories offer reasonably priced ads for listings in your community. Paid media can be used to promote your facility at opportune times like pre-summer (for weddings) or pre-Christmas (for corporate and family parties).

Social media

Social media is a strong force in marketing, and using these networks is often free. Two popular methods are Facebook Fan Pages and Twitter. Social media can provide a great network where word-of-mouth recommendations happen and can give you the opportunity to highlight events with photos that help sell your facility.

Direct contact with target groups

In our technological age, it is sometimes easy to forget that direct contact with your audience is still a powerful marketing tool. Send an e-mail or make a telephone call to area wedding planners, sports team managers, businesses, conference coordinators and food service companies. This personal touch can pay off with bookings.

Local community posting boards

Many community stores and organizations like to promote local facilities, so take advantage of posting boards in your library, grocery store, town hall, recreation center or other community facility.

Online classifieds

Small caterers or home-based businesses sometimes post ads on web-based classified sites (like Kijiji) looking for commercial kitchens to rent. These online classifieds can be a great place to advertise your facility in your local area.

For additional marketing ideas, the *Identify Your Market: Right Buyer, Right Price* factsheet (Agdex 848-5) published by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry discusses many principles that are relevant when marketing a product or service.

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