



The Update: Small Business News, Tips & Ideas

Helping You Reach Your Goals!

March, 2016



Spring is in the air. That means that the local foods season is just around the corner, or in some cases, is already here. I have already had fresh spinach grown in a high tunnel by one of our local vendors, Humble Cottage Farm (<http://www.humblecottagefarm.com/>). It also means Bismarck-Mandan is very close to the opening of the BisMan Food Coop (<http://bismanfoodcoop.com/>).

I have had the privilege to meet and work with many local food growers and advocates here in North Dakota and in Oklahoma prior to my time here. Local food represents one more tool that communities, both rural and urban, can use in their economic development efforts.

A recent USDA report, [*The Economics of Local Food Systems: A Toolkit to Guide Community Discussions, Assessments and Choices*](#), indicates that more than 160,000 farmers and ranchers are involved in local food production. Many of them are doing this on small acreages and even in a backyard. The owners are small business owners that bring new dollars and new jobs into a community.

I encourage you to check out what's happening in terms of the local food movement in your area. Farmers markets, direct sales, CSAs (community supported ag), food coops and hubs, and your favorite restaurants can all be places to explore. I am sure you will enjoy the taste while building your local economy.

Hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Till next time,
Glenn Muske
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In Cooperation With



Quotes of the Month

The most dangerous phrase in the language is: "We've always done it this way." - Rear Admiral Grace Hopper

The most important thing is to enjoy your life – to be happy – It's all that matters – Audrey Hepburn

Upcoming Events

April 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th – NDSU "Field to Fork" webinars – A webinar series designed to help you learn more about growing, transporting, processing, and preserving specialty-crop fruits and vegetables safely. Register at: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork> . You will also find past webinars archived at the site.

April 6th – ND Demographics Conference – Need help knowing where to find and how to interpret demographic data. This is your opportunity. This event will be held at Bismarck State College National Energy Center of Excellence. Go here for more information and to register - <http://www.ndcompass.org/about/2016%20Conference.php#.VtCOqE32bIV>

April 27 – 28, 2016 – Igniting Legendary Leaders – Learn how to build the community you want to live in with Morris Morrison, Greg Tehven, and others. This event will be held at Bismarck State College National Energy Center of Excellence. More information go to: <http://ndsu.ag/ignite>

This Month's Tips

A Look at Good Customer Service

Would you think that the order you give people the news would make a difference? Or that empathy scores better than a speedy response except in the world of social media? Good reminders on how customers may view your customer service much differently than how you think you should handle things. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/surprising-customer-service-data>

Getting Ready to Grow

Your business is running. Things are solid. You have continuous growth and new customers coming in and others who want your services and products. Maybe it is time to think about growth. Just like in starting, you need to carefully think about whether or not this is the right time, etc. And if you decide to go for it, you need to make plans. It is also the time when you have to think about whether you want to remain in the top spot or not. Big questions and big decisions. <http://www.inc.com/neil-patel/7-ways-to-prepare-your-startup-to-scale-up.html>

It's Okay Not to Grow – Lifestyle Businesses

Just as some business look towards growth, others think in terms of developing a lifestyle business. They get the business up and running, it is strong and making money, and it leaves them time to do some of the other things she or he would like. And that's okay.

<http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/deciding-theres-nothing-wrong-with-a-lifestyle-business/>

Telling Your Start-Up Story

People are interested in how businesses get started. What motivated you? What roadblocks did you hit? Why now? Use that story in marketing your business. Don't know what to say or how to do that? Check out these tips. <http://mashable.com/2014/12/17/selling-startup-story/>

It's Time to Hire When.....

Small business owners are always wondering when is the right time to hire more help (or maybe that first employee). This blog suggests that some possible indicators might be getting a bad review or not being able to fill orders or missing a critical skill.

<https://smartblogs.com/leadership/2014/12/18/small-business-when-to-hire-an-employee/>

Customer Satisfaction in One Word

You hear a lot about the need about maintaining customer satisfaction. According to this article, though, you can define it in one word – consistency. Yet that word, while easy to say, is hard to do. But the payoff can be great.

http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/consumer_and_retail/the_three_cs_of_customer_satisfaction_consistency_consistency_consistency

Marketing Services

A lot of the marketing hints you see focus on product marketing and sales. And while selling services can use much of that, the selling of services does has some unique challenges. One is how you need to differentiate your services from someone else. You also need to rank your targets and fit a message to fit each target. <https://www.sba.gov/blogs/8-ways-boost-sales-your-small-business-services>

Business Insurance

You probably already have workers compensation and property insurance. And with your property insurance you may have some type of liability insurance. But what other risks have you covered? And do you know at what level you are covered? How much might you need to come up with in terms of cash for various mishaps? Then there is insurance for product liability issues, errors and omissions, key person, vehicle and special needs such as operating out of your home. It's time to see your insurance professional. Make sure you do it every year.

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241026>

More on Insurance

Other insurance coverages you may wish to consider – business interruption
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241026>

Another Look at Insurance

<https://www.sba.gov/blogs/what-kind-business-insurance-do-you-need>

Referral Marketing

Referrals have potential for your business. Yet they are often overlooked and sometimes even discouraged. According to some studies, they can be the lead to 35% of your new customers, a number that is double most other methods. And the customers it brings tend to spend more money. The bottom line is that you need to consider referral marketing as another marketing tool in your toolkit. <http://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/business-development/why-you-should-pay-attention-to-referral-marketing>

Building a Marketing Plan

Much of this article seems like common sense. Yet because some that feeling the items mentioned may be things you have skipped or not thought about including as you build your marketing plan. And I suspect there are other items that will be completely new in that plan based on this short article. Hope it helps you move forward with your marketing efforts. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julie-niehoff/start-2015-with-this-easy_b_6402306.html

The Importance of Color

The brain focuses on visual information. And one key source of that visual information is color. Check out these stats to see just how color works and then put them to work in your business. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/color-affects-conversion-rate-infographic>

Grow Your Business

I didn't find this article until recently. The ideas in it can be implemented at any time. As you read through them, one thing jumps out – contact, contact, contact. This may not be all that you need to do but certainly is a good place to start. <http://www.thesimpledollar.com/15-ways-to-grow-your-business-in-2015/>

Logo Design Questions

Color, font, and type are just three things you should consider when designing a logo. Then there is the question of do-it-yourself or not. Get some thoughts on these and other questions. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/243181>

Online Tools and Tech Tips

Effective Online Marketing

So what's the most effective online marketing tool? This is a question asked by many. The answer is really, "it depends". That answer is based on who your audience is and what they are using for online access. However, INC takes a look and provides a good overview. <http://www.inc.com/jayson-demers/which-online-marketing-strategy-has-the-best-roi.html>

Marketing Your Blog

Your blog is a marketing tool. It is also something that needs to be marketed just like your products and services. Blogs can be a great content source for you. Here are some ways to make your blog visible to more people. ow.ly/Qw6KQ

Social Media Basics

To get the most out of your social media marketing means optimizing things like headings, images, and links as well as posting real content and being social. The article then gives you some extra tips to consider. <http://www.business2community.com/small-business/small-business-marketing-social-media-basics-01227235>

Amazon May be the Friend of Local Retailers

Does this headline surprise you? Read the article and you may find some of the ideas you had changed. Maybe they do have a place in your business plan. <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/every-local-retailer-embrace-amazon-com/136877/>

People Want to Buy Local

If you are a small-business owner, don't believe the stories you hear that you can't compete. You can. The customer's want to be in your corner. And price is not what may push them away. Read this article. <http://smallbusiness.com/digital-marketing/shop-local-preference/>

Social Media Contests and the Law

We probably all know that there are rules to follow when we run a contest or raffle. Well those same, plus other, rules apply if we are running a contest online. Plus the various social media platforms will have additional rules and guidelines. To get you started check out this article. <http://www.inc.com/jim-belosic/social-media-contests-and-the-law-how-to-keep-things-legal.html>

Effective Websites

Does your website draw people in for more or send them scurrying to the next site? Are you mobile friendly? Is it eye-catching? Do you pitch your self or use some stock photos you found. Does your site build trust? Those and many more questions are examined here - <http://www.jeffbullas.com/2015/08/06/12-reasons-wont-buy-from-your-website-2/>

Price isn't Key in Online Sales

Price is important but the online consumer is usually focused on other factors including risk such as reviews and returns as well as rewards including free gifts or exclusivity. <http://marketingland.com/biggest-myth-online-retail-137618>

Email Works: These Make It Better

Email remains a great marketing tool. It gets opened more often and more likely read. Yet there always are ways to make it perform better. Timing is one performance item. Strong titles are another. Get even more ideas at: <http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/how-to-write-emails-that-actually-get-open-and-read.html?cid=sf01001>

Content Ideas

There are always times when you need or want to write content for your social media campaigns but you just don't have any ideas. Here are some ways to help ignite the spark such as filling information gaps or seeing what is trending on forums. Good luck. <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2015/28293/six-effective-ways-to-clear-content-block-infographic?adref=nl081915>

Carousel Ads – Something New

A new way to help you do storytelling. This includes visual images. Might be something to think about. <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-tell-stories-with-facebook-and-instagram-carousel-ads/>

Effective Content and SEO

Sometimes it seems like these two items, effective content and SEO, are working against each other. If that is the case, then you may want to take another look at how you are working. If it's happening, you can save time and be better at both if you follow these ideas, such as evergreen content and internal linking. See more at: <http://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2423464/8-ways-content-marketing-and-seo-can-work-together#>

What's Going on in the Office?

NORTH DAKOTA RURAL GROCERY INITIATIVE

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 NDSU Extension Service - Center for Community Vitality
 Northern Plains Electric Cooperative
 Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture, Dakota College at Bottineau
 USDA Rural Development
 Bowdon Community Cooperative Board of Directors
 Star Grocery, New Leipzig
 Tuttle Community Store
 North Dakota Grocer's Association
 North Dakota Farmer's Union

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Lori Capouch, rural development director, c: 667-6444

North Dakota Rural Grocery Initiative moves forward

Mandan, N.D. --- A newly organized task force, the North Dakota Rural Grocery Initiative, is working to capture opportunities identified in a survey of rural grocers operating in North Dakota. The survey, conducted in 2015, revealed four areas of concern for the rural operators: affordability and availability of product, labor force, networking and education options and the cost of effective marketing.

The task force is working with the North Dakota Grocers Association to distribute a newsletter that will provide information on best practices, changing regulations, upcoming events and small store marketing success stories. Planning is also under way to deliver quarterly educational webinars for store managers and boards of directors.

In the upcoming months, the task force will begin to contact rural grocers to aggregate data related to supply and marketing. This data will be used to identify whether there are changes that can be made in the way stores currently operate to bring about cost savings. For example, there may be opportunities for small operators to purchase certain items collectively to secure a discount for a larger volume order. The same could hold true for marketing. Small stores may be able to make a stronger "buy local" statement by collectively participating in a unified marketing campaign. The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives will provide a section on their website at www.ndarec.com to host information related to the North Dakota Rural Grocery Initiative.

The National Rural Grocery Convention is scheduled for June 6 and 7 in Wichita, Kan. If there is adequate interest, the North Dakota Farmers Union will sponsor a bus to transport interested individuals to the conference. Attendees would be responsible for their own lodging, meals and conference registration. This is the fifth national conference, which will focus on the latest thinking about rural grocery stores and rural community sustainability, best practices, and a path forward for healthy food access in rural places.

The North Dakota Rural Grocery Initiative is a volunteer group comprised of five rural grocers, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, North Dakota State University Center for Community Vitality, North Dakota Farmers Union, USDA Rural Development State Office, Dakota College at Bottineau and Northern Plains Electric Cooperative. Grocers who are interested in receiving communications from the Initiative or would like to attend the national convention should contact Lori Capouch or Mary Stumpf at 701-663-6501.

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