

# Farmers Market Management Skills



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# The Farmers Market Management Series • Volume 2

## Farmers Market Management Skills

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# Introduction

This book is part of a series presented by the University of California Small Farm Center to support the professional development of farmers market managers.

Since the 1970s farmers markets have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, and in that time they have come to once again play an important role in the economic viability of small-scale farmers. The success of any market, and the financial success of participating farmers, depends to a great extent on the skills and abilities of the manager of the market. In the first volume of this series, we introduced you to the process of starting a farmers market. In this volume, we outline and describe ways to build necessary management skills. The third volume is devoted to strategic growth and marketing.

**This chapter will enable you to:**

- ▶ Gain an overview of the contents of this volume.
- ▶ Understand the organization of chapters and contents.
- ▶ See how the layout is designed to support your skill development.

## What is a Manager?

Managers can be described as catalysts. As the manager of a farmers market, you are responsible for making things happen. You organize, you plan, you promote. You are also responsible for managing people. You communicate, you delegate, you resolve conflicts.

Being a manager means that you must know both the “what” and the “how.” The “what” refers to the vision and direction of your organization. What you do, what you represent, what you plan to do in the future. The “how” is the collective myriad of details that helps you, and the people you work with, accomplish your goals and objectives. How you organize the vendors, how you promote the market, how you communicate with the people around you. As a manager you have to be able to see the forest and the trees.

Your task is not an easy one. Count the number of really great managers you have had in the past. Now think about how many bad managers you have had. Chances are the bad managers outnumber the great ones. Being a good manager requires not only strong organizational and planning skills but also the ability to work well with others and develop productive relationships with a wide variety of people.

If you are new at managing, take some time to look around you and understand how things work. Who makes decisions? Who do people respect and why? What are the underlying tensions? How do things actually get done? You may be full of

energy and ideas that make you want to jump in head first to begin doing your job, but it will pay off in the long run if you take the time to more fully assess the situation. Talk to vendors, customers, and former managers, if possible, about the history of the market. This will signal to others who have been around longer than you that you are aware of and respect what has come before you. Once you have a solid grasp of what you have gotten yourself into, you can be more active in branding the market with your unique personality and leadership.

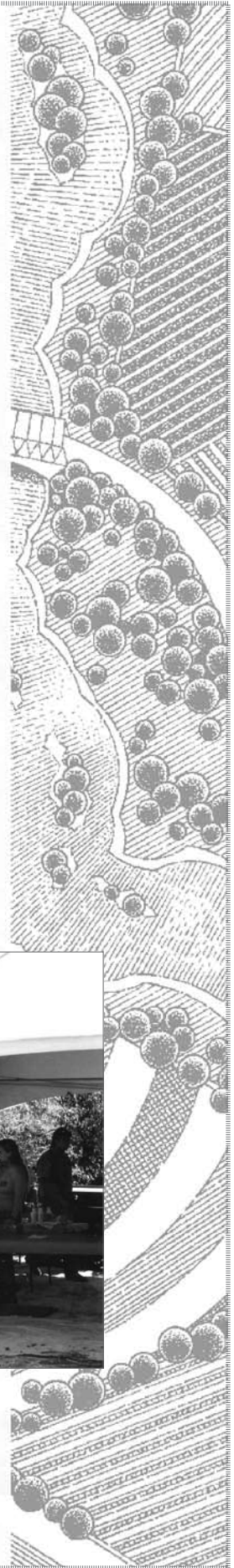
### How to Use This Book

In addition to observation, there are other tools to help you be succeed in managing your market, and this book is designed to be one of those tools. This volume is divided into three sections. The first introduces you to the roles and responsibilities of the manager. Chapter Two describes the manager's roles as visionary and leader. Chapter Three describes the sometimes overlapping roles of analyst, goal-setter, decision-maker, communicator, and evaluator. No manager plays all roles at every moment, but at different times you may be called upon to play each of the roles described in Chapters Two and Three.

The second section of this book, covering Chapters Four through Eight, is dedicated to relationship-building. Chapters Four and Five discuss the relationship between the manager and the board of directors and how to strengthen the board. Chapters Six and Seven describe ways to maintain positive relationships and, when necessary, manage conflict with vendors. And Chapter Eight outlines ways to maintain and improve customer relations.

The third section of the book discusses specific skills involved in carrying out the roles and responsibilities of the manager and in building and maintaining positive relationships with all those involved in the farmers market.

It is unlikely that any manager will need every chapter of this book. As you read through this introductory chapter, consider which ones seem familiar and which may contain new information. Think about your interactions with others—what areas cause you concern or problems? What



## Manager Responsibility Matrix

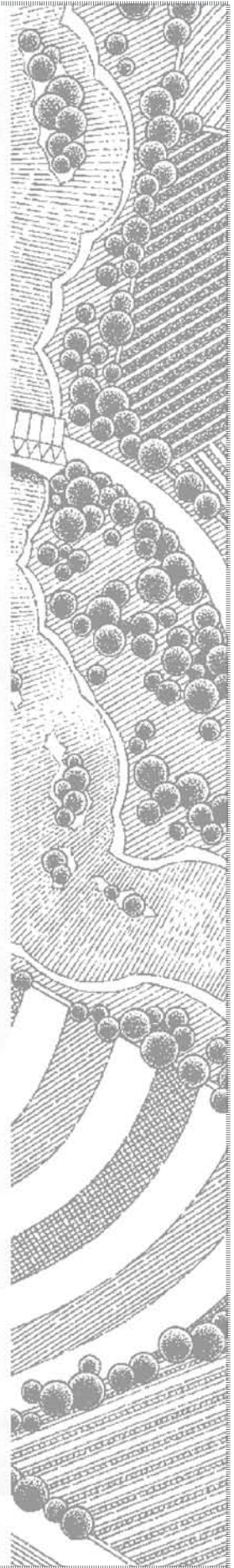
<b>The manager coordinates and oversees ongoing functioning of the market.</b>	<b>The manager envisions and plans for the future of the market.</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	
To ensure that, as a venue for the sale of farmers' products, the market functions smoothly and effectively.	To ensure the sustainability and viability of the market.
<b>Responsibilities</b>	
<p><b>Analyzing:</b> Analyze situations to identify problem areas and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p><b>Decision-making:</b> Make timely, well-informed decisions with fairness and the best interests of the market in mind.</p> <p><b>Goal-setting:</b> Set realistic, achievable, measurable goals for the market.</p> <p><b>Organizing:</b> Organize own time, work space, market activities, and personnel.</p> <p><b>Planning:</b> Plan each season's market activities, including special events, advertising, and meetings.</p> <p><b>Budgeting:</b> Work with the board to develop and manage a reasonable budget based on short-term goals and activities.</p> <p><b>Implementing:</b> Implement actions collectively chosen or individually as appropriate.</p> <p><b>Monitoring:</b> Monitor progress on projects and activities and provide appropriate feedback.</p> <p><b>Evaluating:</b> Evaluate the level of achievement and performance of changes in the system.</p>	<p><b>Problem-solving:</b> Identify, analyze, and propose solutions for problems.</p> <p><b>Communicating:</b> Communicate effectively with various constituencies of the market—vendors, customers, regulators, public officials, the media, the community at large, and the board of directors.</p> <p><b>Managing conflict:</b> Effectively manage conflict that arises among vendors, consumers, the staff, volunteers, and board members.</p> <p><b>Delegating:</b> Delegate tasks that can be accomplished by others.</p> <p><b>Long-range planning:</b> Periodically engage the board to develop and revise long-range strategic plans to position or reposition the market to access emerging opportunities or confront threats to its sustainability.</p>

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issues keep you awake at night? The answers to these questions can tell you where to begin. Alternately, you may want to start with something that seems familiar, hone your skills, and continue to improve on your strengths.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction and outlines the skills and abilities the chapter is designed to develop. By looking at the learning objectives for the chapter, you can assess your need for the contents. You may return again and again to certain chapters and skip others completely. While the skills, abilities, and relationships discussed in this book are complex and interwoven, you may already have many of the necessary qualities and skills.

Two of the most important sources of learning for managers are on-the-job experience and discussions with colleagues. We encourage you to read this book with your actual experiences in mind and to find colleagues with whom and from whom you can learn.



## The Manager as Visionary and Leader

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Understand what is involved in developing the vision and direction for your farmers market.
- ▶ Know the traits common to effective leaders.
- ▶ Know how vision and leadership contribute to your success as a manager.

You may know more about your farmers market than anybody else. You know who your farmers are, who your customers are, who supports your market, how and when the bills are paid, and where the stationery is kept. You know the small details and the big issues. But you are not working alone. To be an effective leader, you need to have a vision. It is the responsibility of the board of directors to work with you to create the vision for your market, but you play a huge role in developing, communicating, and implementing the vision.

### Developing the Vision and Direction for Your Market

You need to be clear about the goals and objectives of your market so that you can articulate them to the people with whom you work. Even though you may have a hundred things on your to-do list each week, it is critical always to keep the

“big picture” in mind.

Take some time to reflect on these questions:

- How does this market fit into the community?
- What products and services does it provide?
- What role do I see it playing in the neighborhood now and into the future?
- How do the decisions I make affect the bigger picture?

Know how to talk about your market. Be prepared for questions from a variety of different sources and have answers to them that will generate interest and excitement in what you are doing. Whether you are recruiting new vendors for the market or planning a promotional event with local talent, sharing your market’s story will get people involved.

For instance, if a local reporter is interested in writing an article on your market, what would you say at the interview? “Well, we are a bunch of farmers out here selling our produce so come support us” does not convey the same message as “We are providing a valuable service to the community by bringing high quality,



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fresh produce straight from the farm to a friendly social environment in the center of your community.” The way you represent the market to the public will have a big impact on how customers perceive it.

The vision that you carry will be the source of energy and enthusiasm from which everyone involved in your market will draw. People will be looking to you for direction; if you are not motivated to make the market the best that it can be, they likely will not be either.

### The Manager as Leader

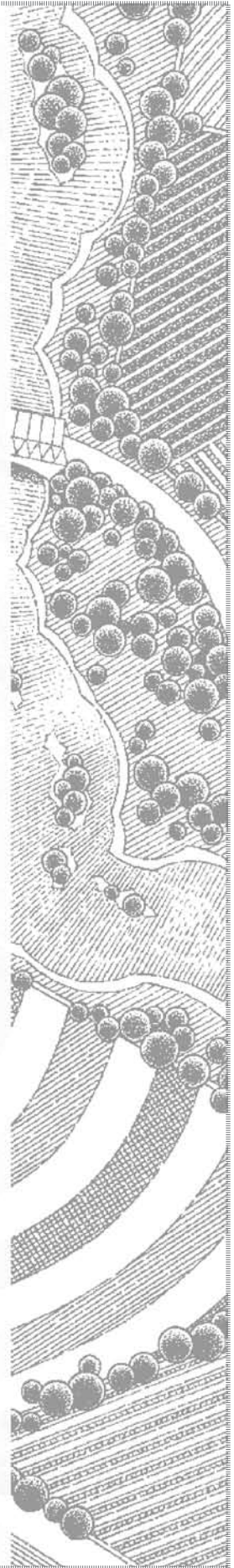
When you think back on the best managers you have worked with in the past, what personality characteristics stand out for you? Is it their strong booming voice or the infectious energy they brought to the job? Is it the way they always seemed to make the right decision at the right time? Great managers are leaders. They are confident, optimistic, decisive, creative, and ethical. They also treat people with respect and often maintain a sense of humor when the going gets tough. There are different leadership styles, and some great managers get things done in the background, enabling others to shine and developing their talents, while others naturally gravitate toward the spotlight. Use the following list of leadership traits to build on your natural strengths.

#### Confident

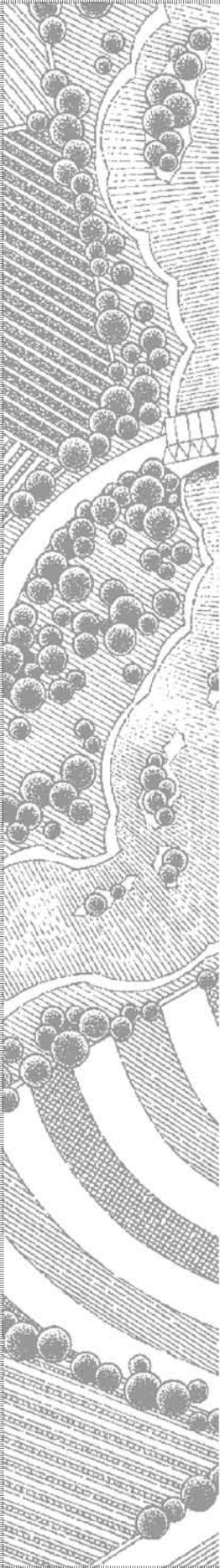
Great managers know they can get the job done. No problem is insurmountable. It may take some creative thinking and hard work to figure out, but it can be fixed, accomplished, or improved. To inspire the confidence of the people with whom you work, you must display this trait yourself. People do not like to work for someone who is unsure or can be easily pushed around. The confidence you project as manager will help others feel more confident about the work they are doing for the market as well. Being confident does not mean making unrealistic promises about your abilities. Rather, it means knowing exactly what you are capable of and working to your highest capacity.

#### Optimistic

People are attracted to optimism. If you see the gold at the end of the rainbow, you make it easier for others to see it too. No one wants to work for a negative or pessimistic manager. Focusing on the difficulties of running the market or the lousy







weather on market day will demotivate people around you. On the other hand, you have great potential to infect others with positive energy that will make them feel good about the market and their contributions to it.

### **Decisive**

A good manager knows how to make decisions. Effective decision-making, which is discussed in more detail later, requires not just blurting out orders and directives from the top but gathering input from diverse perspectives and critically assessing situations.

### **Creative**

Management techniques are not set in stone. A good manager often relies on a little creative thinking to develop new strategies, solve problems, or find new sources of funding. Do not be afraid to look beyond the “normal” way of doing things for some creative options that have not been tried before.

### **Respectful**

People fundamentally want to be treated well. If you treat others with respect, they will return the favor. A great deal of your job centers on your ability to get other people to work with you. Respecting your coworkers and business associates will make your task much easier.

### **Balanced**

Do not forget your sense of humor. If you are not enjoying your work, you may be making others miserable too. Humor can take the edge off the most difficult situations, so do not be afraid to look at the humorous side of things.

### **Ethical**

Over time, you will develop a detailed understanding of the issues and problems that your market faces. But have you taken time to think about your personal ethics in regard to these issues? Say, for instance, that you have begun to suspect that one of your more popular vendors is selling produce that she did not grow herself. She draws many customers to the market, and the other vendors do not appear to be aware of what she is doing. Where do you draw the line? Do you run the risk of losing customers and kick her out of the market? Do you say nothing and hope

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that no one else figures out what is going on? In this case, it is your personal and professional ethics that will decide the outcome. Perhaps no one will figure out that you let this woman sell outside produce, but they may know instinctively that you are applying different standards to different situations.

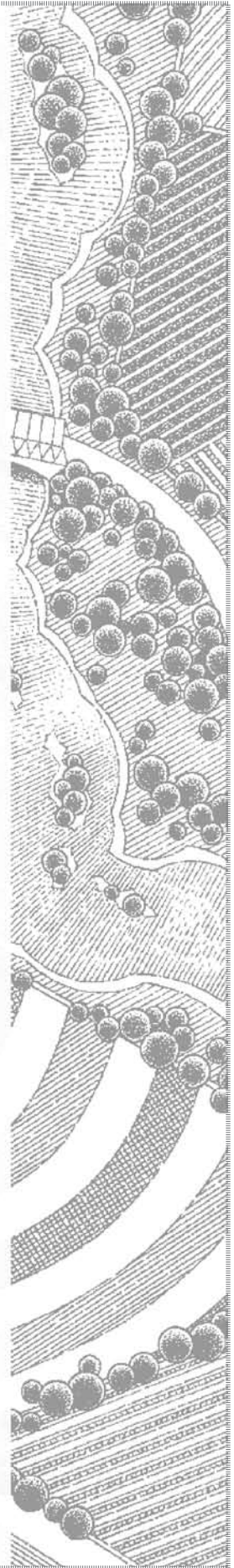
### Trustworthy

Building trust takes time. If you have been active in your community for a long time, you likely have already established a reputation with many of the people around you. You know the value of the long-term relationships you have developed with your neighbors, business associates, and friends. If you are new to the area, you have a lot of work to do to encourage trust from the people with whom you work. If you have taken over a market from a previous manager, you may be seen as an outsider for awhile and you will have to put some extra effort into building trust with established vendors and customers.

The importance of being trustworthy cannot be overstated. The degree to which others trust you will determine how likely they will be to work with you now and to continue to work with you in the future. Once you have secured the trust of those around you, it is important to maintain that trust. If a person trusts you and you betray that trust, it will be quite difficult, perhaps impossible, to regain it. Furthermore, word of mouth from scorned business associates or former customers can be devastating to a business.

### Conclusion

This chapter has introduced you to some of the responsibilities of leaders and to some of the characteristics shared by effective leaders. The next chapter discusses roles and responsibilities of the manager in carrying out the day-to-day work of the market.



## Day-to-Day Management

Chapter One introduced you to the manager's roles as visionary and leader and as day-to-day manager and administrator. This chapter provides further explanation and detail about the manager's functions in running the market. The functions of a manager, with some overlap, includes analyst, goal-setter, organizer, decision-maker, communicator, and evaluator. Each of those roles occurs to some

extent as you carry out others; for example, in your role as organizer you certainly need to communicate and when you set goals you must analyze and evaluate. In this chapter we bring each of those different roles to the foreground so that you can see how each contributes to your success as a manager.

**This chapter will enable you to:**

- ▶ **Understand the many functions of the farmers market manager.**
- ▶ **Add to the strategies and techniques you use in each function.**

### The Manager as Analyst

As a farmers market manager, you must be able to think critically and, at times, ask difficult questions. Your vision of the ideal farmers market must be grounded in practical and realistic terms. The simplest solution is not always the best so do not be afraid to ask questions and rethink your original plans. Some

questions to keep in mind whenever you are trying to accomplish something new or reflecting on recent events include:

- What can we do to make this situation better?
- What have we overlooked?
- Does everyone have the resources they need to accomplish the task?
- Do we have a backup plan in case something goes wrong?



Taking time to critically analyze and revise your plans will support actions that better fit into your big picture rather than detract from it.

### The Manager as Goal-Setter

Every organization has goals that it is trying to achieve and every manager is responsible in some part for setting them. Well-defined goals are critical for provid-

ing direction and purpose to an organization. You cannot achieve something if you cannot see it, and goals are the lanterns lighting the way. They not only help you see where you are going; they help you measure how far you have come. Goals help clarify individuals' roles in an organization, identify tasks that need to be accomplished, and articulate the vision of the organization to others.

### Setting Goals

Whether you are setting the goals for the entire organization or working with a diverse group of board and community members, setting goals is an important process in determining the future direction of your market. Following are some things to consider when setting goals.



### Keep Your Goals Simple

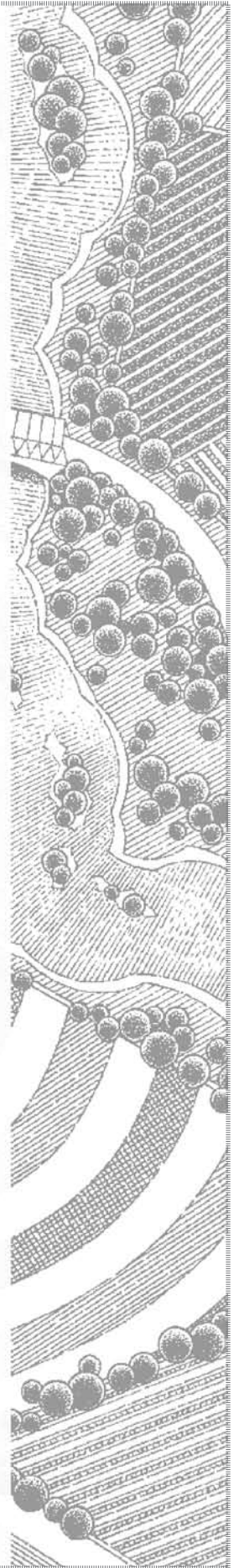
Simple goals can be understood by everyone involved in the organization. They are clear and unambiguous. If the goal you have in mind takes more than one sentence to state, you probably are trying to describe multiple goals. If this is the case, break your idea into single, one-sentence goals. Goals should be specific statements about what you want to achieve. Following are examples of clear, well-defined goals:

- Increase the number of customers at the market by 10 percent by next year.
- Find two new sponsors for our market by Christmas.

Notice that these goals have specific timelines and numbers that can be measured. If your goals are too vague, you will have difficulty working toward them or knowing when they have been accomplished.

### Limit the Number of Goals

Having too many goals is as bad as not having any. An extensive list of goals will only detract energy from the focus of making real progress in your organization. Pick two or three goals that have the greatest relevance to your organization and work on accomplishing those.



### Take Small Steps to Reach Big Goals

It is important to break big goals into small steps. For example, you may want to reach the goal of increasing your number of customers by 10 percent in the next year. That may seem like an overwhelming task without a plan for how to get there. By breaking that goal down into smaller, more easily accomplished steps, however, you can begin to understand your progress toward the goal and know when you eventually will reach it.

### Link Goals to the Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals

It does little good to define goals that no one has the time or resources to achieve. Make sure that the goals you set for your organization fit with the responsibilities of the people working with you. Otherwise, they soon are forgotten or pushed aside.

### Revisit and Revise

Periodically look back to your goals and assess your progress toward achieving them. Goals should be flexible enough that you can modify them as situations and environments change. If the goals you first set do not address the reality of your market, do not be afraid to change them. They should help you, not hold you back.

### Communicate Your Goals

Once you have identified your goals, everyone involved in your organization needs to be made aware of them. Communicating your goals will help get others to commit to them. Have one-on-one meetings with people to inform them of the significance of the goals. Get people excited about what you are trying to accomplish. If a goal requires a team effort, have a meeting with the entire team to plan and discuss the project. Well-defined, relevant goals help create a shared vision of the organization, so use them to your advantage.

If your goals require work to be done by others, assign specific projects with clearly understood timelines. Explaining the overall vision of the project will help get people committed to it. By outlining specific tasks, you help others understand



their roles in making the vision happen in a way that is manageable. Make sure that people are clear about what their responsibilities are before sending them off to do the job. Finally, in subsequent days or weeks, monitor their progress. Provide positive feedback as well as constructive criticism when you can to encourage continued performance on the project.

### The Manager as Organizer

Much of your time is spent organizing—organizing yourself and organizing the work of others.

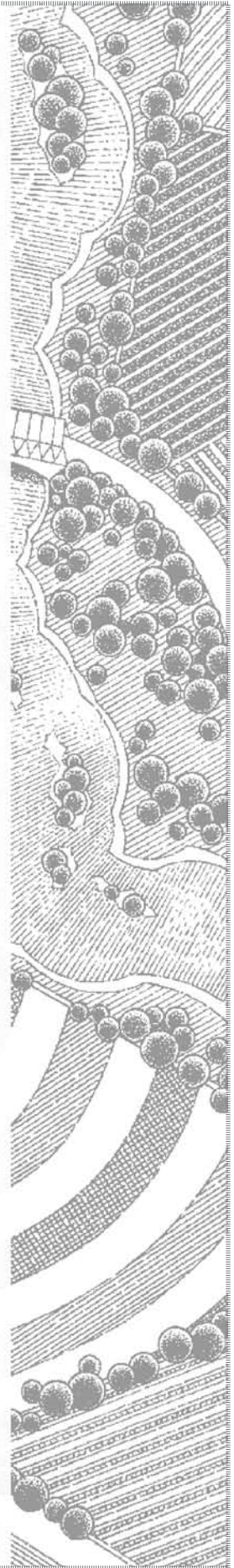
#### Getting Yourself Organized

Before you can effectively organize other people and coordinate something as complex as a farmers market, you must first get yourself organized. Knowing exactly what your roles and responsibilities are—and, more importantly, how you are going to accomplish them—will make your job much easier and make your goals more attainable.

**Manage your time.** One of the most difficult and essential elements of being organized is managing your time. Chances are you spend more time than you realize doing things that are not top priorities for your job: getting interrupted by phone calls, shuffling through endless emails, coordinating parts of an event that other people could do just as easily. If, as nineteenth-century economist Vilfredo Pareto theorized, most people spend 20 percent of their effort accomplishing 80 percent of their job, where does the rest of their effort go? Chapter Thirteen offers some helpful tips for learning to effectively manage your time.

**Prioritize your responsibilities.** Another tool to help you get organized is to prioritize the tasks associated with your job. Which activities are the most important? Which are most urgent? Which ones can wait for a few days until things slow down? Try to identify what must be done and which tasks are just not that important. Remember, someone else's crisis is not necessarily your crisis. Poor planning or lack of foresight on their part may not be your fault. Do not let someone else's problems distract you from what is most important for you to accomplish to effectively do your job.

**Keep your desk organized.** As simple as it may seem, having an organized work space will make it easier for you to get your work done. When the phone rings and someone wants to know who is performing at your



market next week, do you have the schedule nearby? Can you find things easily when you need them? Take time to create a system for filing your paperwork, stacking your bills, and keeping track of appointments. Get a day planner or desk calendar on which you can keep track of meetings and make notes so you know what you have coming up in the near future. Make sure this system works for you—it does no good if you cannot remember how it works or spend more time organizing your desk than doing your work.

**Set clear boundaries.** Because you are responsible for making the market function, you most likely have people coming to you all the time asking you to solve problems and make decisions. It is easy to get distracted from what you are doing to answer a question or do something else that is “more urgent.” To effectively manage time, however, try to keep interruptions to a minimum when you work on a complex project. Make sure that other people know your availability, both while you are in the office and once you leave. It is okay to turn your pager off when you are not at work and not take phone calls at home past a certain hour in the evening. Set clear boundaries on your time and make sure people respect them. This will save your energy for the times you are actually on the clock.

### Organizing Others

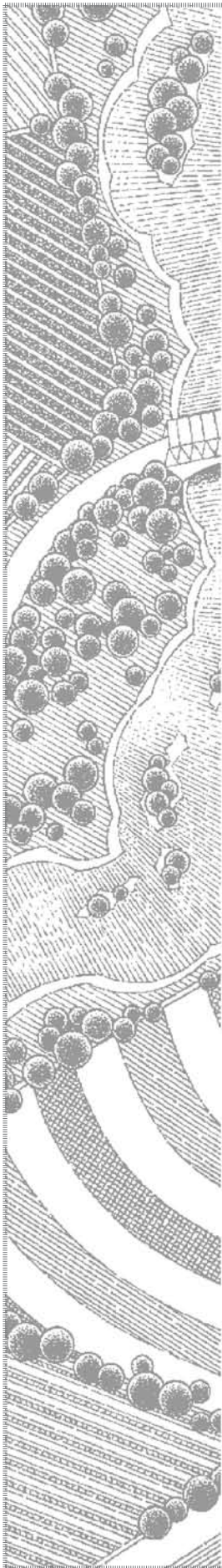
One of your primary roles as manager is to organize the activities and responsibilities of the people with whom you work. Doing this effectively requires strong organizational and planning skills and the ability to see how individual people and available resources fit together to accomplish the goals of the organization. It requires both that “big picture” thinking and critical analysis of little details to make the market a success.

**Determine Tasks.** Before you can lead other people in the direction, you must know what steps need to be taken to accomplish the market’s goals and objectives. You need to have a clear idea of what tasks need to be done and the deadlines for each job. Some will be short-term, one-time projects. Others will be long term and complex. Make lists if this helps you identify everything that must be done.



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The following questions are useful to consider when trying to organize tasks:

- What are we going to do?
- Who will do what? Who does it involve?
- Why must we do it? What will happen if we do not do it?
- When does it start? When does it end?
- Where will it take place?
- How will it take place?

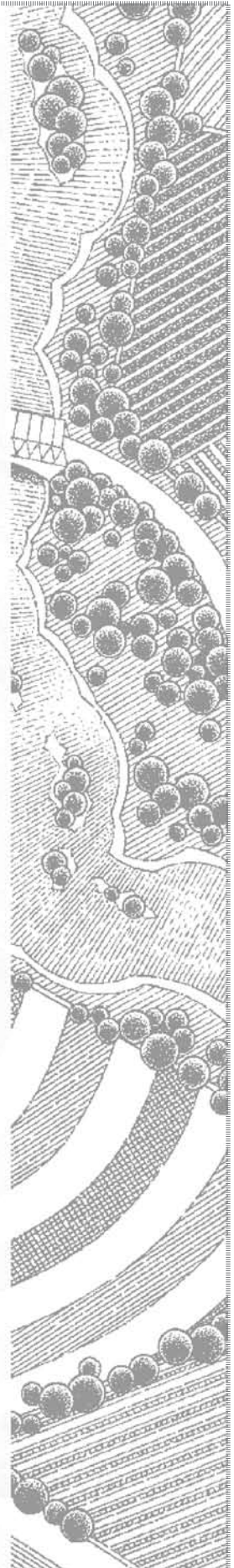


**Assess your resources.** Now that you know what needs to be done, you have to figure out what resources are available to accomplish it. Assessing your resources includes identifying the skills and strengths offered by people with whom you work and determining whether the financial and material resources are available. To do this, think about all the details involved in the project, including:

- How much support does the project require?
- What is the timeline?
- What types of equipment will be needed?
- Who is the best person or group of people to do this job?
- How will the project be coordinated?
- How will the project be monitored?

You may find that you need to modify or scale back a project based on the resources that are currently available. Taking time to assess all the details of a project make it more likely that your goals actually will get accomplished rather than be forgotten or buried under a huge pile of other things to do.

**Set up a structure to accomplish all tasks.** When you are sure that you have the resources to get the job done, set priorities and assign someone to do each of the tasks you have identified. Whether you are the one who will do most of these things or you have a large number of people working with you, you need to be organized about how things get done and keep track of progress along the way. Chapter Fourteen discusses the process of delegating tasks in more detail.





## The Manager as Decision-Maker

As a manager, you make decisions every day. When people have questions regarding the market, they most likely will look to you for answers. Some decisions are easy to make and require little effort on your part. At times, however, you will be faced with the task of making really difficult decisions. Some managers postpone making such decisions for fear of making the wrong decision. Or they wait for situations to work themselves out instead of taking decisive action. But remember, part of the reason you were hired as manager was to make those tough decisions and to facilitate discussion about difficult situations. How you handle this responsibility will affect how you are perceived by those with whom you work. This does not mean you should make instant decisions whenever someone asks you a question so that you seem decisive. Nor does it mean ordering people around and acting like a dictator. Strong managers include other people in the decision-making process and encourage new ideas and different solutions from others.

Take some time to think about the following questions. They will help you reflect on the way decisions are made in your organization.

- Are decisions being made by the people most affected by the decision?
- Are all the major points of view (consumers, vendors, the community, the board) represented?
- How is the decision-making process spelled out?
- Are decision-makers democratically chosen?
- Is the organization hierarchical or more lateral?



At times, the decision-making process can be difficult. It is perhaps one of the biggest challenges managers face. Following are some considerations to keep in mind when faced with making difficult decisions.

### Seek Input

While you may have a great deal of information about a particular problem or circumstance, your perspective is not the only one. Talk to other people who may have different views about the situation. Often there are aspects of a situation that you will overlook or are not aware of. Do not be afraid to tap this resource and ask for opinions from coworkers and others. The fact that their opinions may differ from yours does not mean they are wrong. Ultimately, your decision will more accurately reflect reality when it is based on more input and information rather than less.

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On the other hand, do not procrastinate when it comes to the hard work of making the decision by continuing endlessly to gather information and talk to people about the situation. A good manager knows when enough information has been gathered.



In the end, people will be more likely to support your decision if they were included in the decision-making process and understand the reasoning behind the decision.

### Define the Problem

Once you have all the information you need, define the problem in clear terms. It may be that what seems to be the problem is actually a symptom of a larger issue. For example, if some of your vendors are consistently going home without having sold as much as they expected, you at first think that attendance is low and you need to do more to promote the market. After doing some research, however, you realize that the market has reached the maximum potential of its customer base and is unlikely to gain more customers no matter how much you advertise. In this case, the real problem may be that you have too many growers selling similar products. The problem underlying the symptom in this case, then, may be a lack of communication and coordination at planting time and when recruiting vendors.

### Think about Alternative Solutions

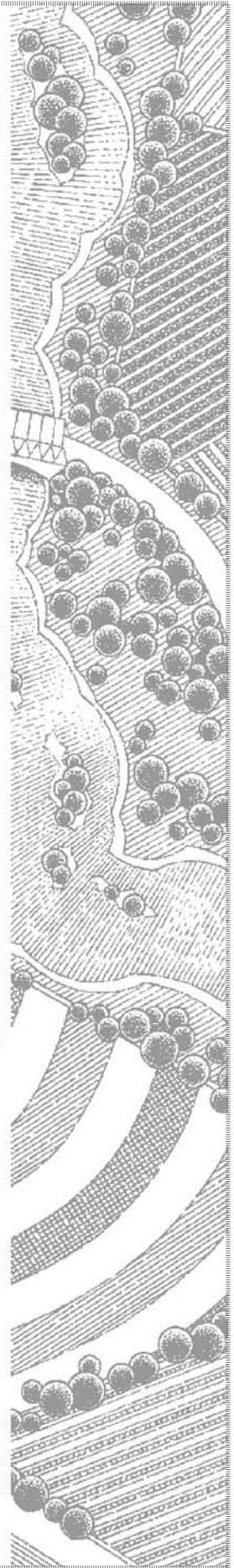
Often there is more than one way to solve a problem or make a decision. Take time to think about various outcomes that will likely result from your decision. Is there a better way to solve this problem? Will this “solution” create a different problem down the road?

### Make a Decision

Once you have clarified the issue, make the decision in a timely manner. Do you remember being frustrated in the past when you asked someone in a position of authority to decide on something and you were kept waiting or the decision was delayed for a long time? People are looking to you for action. If you waffle on an issue, you may be seen as lacking confidence or as not caring about their concerns.

### Explain the Process

If you make a decision that conflicts with another group’s interests, which is bound to happen, make sure that you explain the process you went through to reach



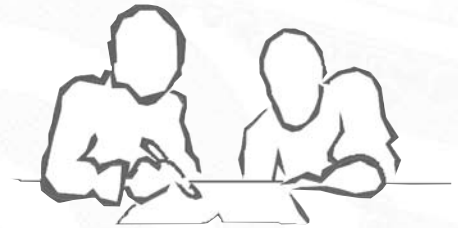
that decision. Just as you may not initially have had all the information required to make a good decision, others may not initially understand the reasoning behind a decision unless you make it clear.

### Evaluate the Results

Finally, do not forget to monitor the outcomes of your decisions. Have you actually solved the problem or just temporarily appeased people? Has the decision-making process itself made other people feel included or excluded? Does something need to be done differently at the next market, next month, or next year to keep the situation from recurring?

### The Manager as Communicator

As the maxim says, "Communication is a two way street." To traverse that street, managers must learn the fine art of listening. Listening means more than simply hearing what other people say. It also entails understanding more subtle signals such as the listener's body language and eye contact. Whether you realize it or not, you listen with more than your ears. A good listener also uses his or her eyes and gut instincts to understand what someone is trying to say. Keep your eyes open, watch peoples' body language, and trust your instincts so you can really hear and, more importantly, understand another.



### Listen

When someone comes to talk to you, stop what you are doing and give them your full attention. Try to put the million other things you have to think about out of your mind. If you continue to work while someone is talking, you send a signal that you are not interested in what they have to say or that they are not worth your time. Do not sit back and yawn as they sit down near you or look around the room while they are talking. Do not answer the phone in the middle of a conversation unless you must. If people think that you are not interested, they will be less likely to talk to you about something in the future. How many times have you heard a manager say, "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

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If you really are too busy at the moment someone wants to talk, say so and establish a time within the next few days to have the conversation. Making a firm appointment shows that you are committed to listening. Do not miss that appointment!

When you listen to someone, look the person in the eye and ask questions if you are not sure about something said. Once you think you understand the person's point, convey it back to make sure that you did not misinterpret what the person said.

### Give Feedback

As the manager of a farmers market, you may feel that the responsibility falls on you to do everything required to make the market work. In reality, however, many people are involved in making the market work. No matter how overwhelmed you may feel at times, particularly on market day, it is important to take time to recognize the contributions of others and to give them feedback on the work they have done.

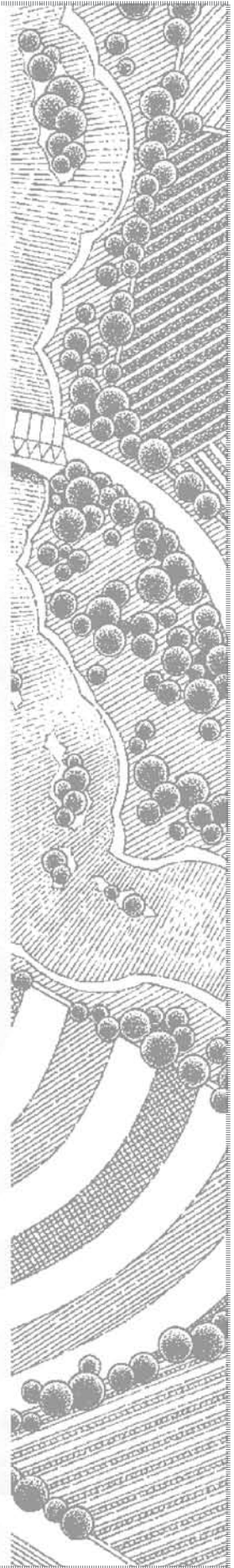
One of the biggest mistakes managers make is failing to recognize the contributions of others. A well-timed "Thanks, that looks great!" or "Hey, Bob, did you see what a good job Linda here did on that sign?" will go a long way toward making people feel valued and appreciated. If you forget to appreciate the people with whom you work, they may just forget to help you next time.

If you have to give negative feedback, which you inevitably will, make it constructive. Do not say "Wow, Joe, that flyer is really ugly. Make another one." Suggest how it could be improved. Encourage the positive aspects of the work and make sure you recognize the effort. Also, resist the urge to take the task away from someone because you think you can do it better. You probably do not have time. A bit of coaching can save you time and get the results you are looking for.

### The Manager as Evaluator

A key step in managing any kind of project or organization is evaluating progress toward the accomplishment of your goals. Big projects are rarely accomplished overnight and they do not happen in one easy step. It is your responsibility to monitor the many activities and individuals that, in total, influence the direction of your market.

Evaluation of programs and people should occur frequently and consistently. This does not mean watching every move that every person makes or calling your volunteers every day to make sure they are doing what you would like. It does mean



checking in with people periodically, asking questions, watching the environment around you, and generally being aware of what is happening.

Following are some questions that you can ask yourself when evaluating your market as a whole or a specific project that is underway to help you monitor progress toward your objectives.

**How much progress has been made toward your goals?** If your organization has clearly defined goals with specific timelines and tasks associated with them, it should be relatively easy to assess the progress that has been made toward meeting them. If you are unable to answer this question, perhaps you need to go back and do some work to better define your goals and initiate a plan to reach them.

**What major problems need to be addressed?** Look around and critically assess the environment. What is not occurring the way you would like? Is morale declining among the vendors? Have you noticed that fewer customers are showing up for the Tuesday market? Keep an eye on things and take note of both subtle and obvious signs of distress or discontent. When you notice something, do not just ignore it and hope it will go away. Address problems early or they will grow.

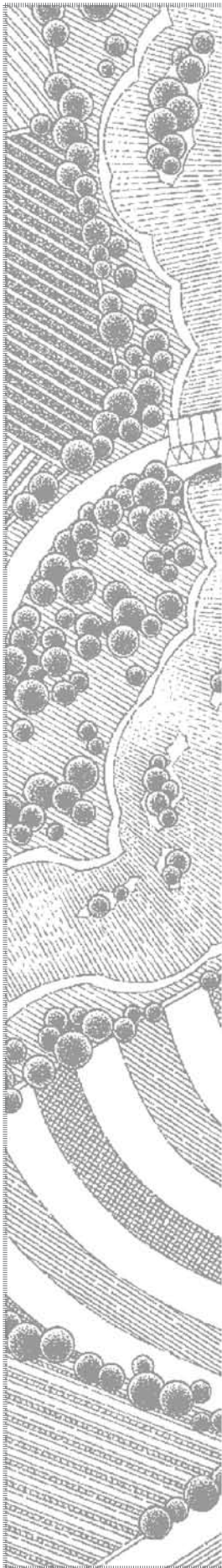


**How are the actual costs comparing to the planned costs?**

Responsible financial management is a key component of running a business. Keep track of how much is being spent on specific projects before you go over budget. Sighting potential financial problems early will help avoid bigger ones down the road.

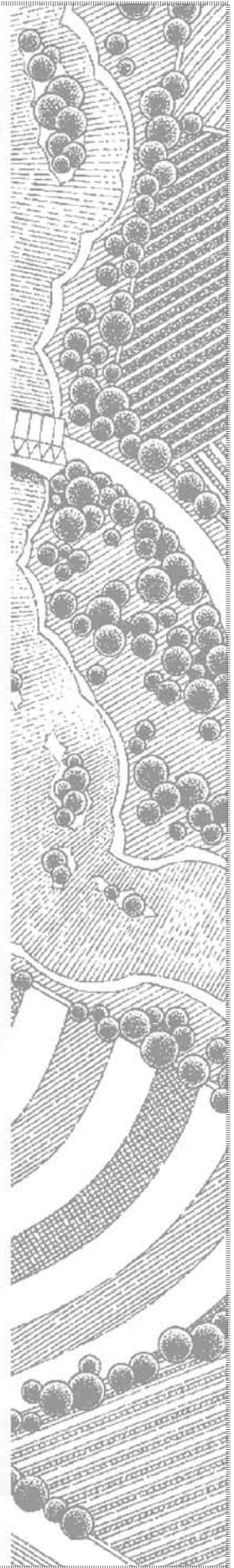
**What would you do differently if you could?** In addition to looking at the problems or difficulties that your organization faces, you need to be able to offer solutions. If you see something that is not working right, think about how you would improve it and work toward making that happen. If the changes are out of range right now, perhaps because of limited human resources or finances, plan how you can eventually accomplish them.

**What have you learned so far?** Finally, do not forget to take time to learn from your past accomplishments and your past mistakes. You do not need to reinvent the wheel every time you start a project. Being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your organization will help you to fine-tune the market into a stronger operation.



### Conclusion

This chapter has introduced you to some of the roles and responsibilities of managers as they carry out the day-to-day work of the market. The next section addresses ways to use these and other skills to build relationships with key constituencies of the market—vendors, the board, and customers. Later we provide more detailed descriptions and support for developing specific skills such as communication and time management.



## Working with Your Board of Directors

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Be familiar with different types of boards and their advantages and disadvantages.
- ▶ Be aware of the responsibilities of the board of directors.
- ▶ Define your relationship to the board.
- ▶ Choose strategies to strengthen your board and your relationship with your board.

Most farmers markets have a board of directors. All non-profit organizations are required to have a board and even farmers markets that are sponsored by other agencies or organizations often have boards. The relationship between the market manager and the board can take many forms but, to be effective, you as the manager should be aware of that relationship and seek to make it as positive and productive as possible.

### Types of Farmers Market Boards

Farmers markets across the U.S. utilize several different models of board leadership. While there is no one right way to organize and recruit your board, it is important to construct a governing body that has the time and the energy to assist you in your efforts at the market. Furthermore, many managers agree that the most effective market board is one that reflects the diverse interests of the surrounding community as well as the geographic reach of the market. If you are involved in starting a market, you may have the opportunity to contribute to the formation of the board; otherwise, this information will simply help you to recognize the characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses inherent in the model of board leadership your market has adopted. In some cases, you may use this information to initiate a discussion of changes in the market structure and bylaws to strengthen the board's ability to provide effective leadership for the market.

Following are three different types of boards of directors and the strengths and constraints they face.

Following are three different types of boards of directors and the strengths and constraints they face.

#### Vendor-Only Boards

Many market boards are comprised exclusively of vendors at the market. This type of board ensures a direct interest in the success of the market since each member is, to some degree, trying to make a living from their sales. In addition, the policies and procedures set by the board will accurately reflect the realities of the market if

## Farmers Market Management Skills

the members are familiar with its day-to-day operations and the issues it faces. At least a few board members will always be present at the market to assist, particularly in situations of conflict.

Vendor involvement on the board can, however, create a conflict of interest if one or more board members are personally involved in a dispute with other vendors. It may be hard at times to separate a board role from a vendor role. If board members see themselves as being in direct competition with other vendors or, conversely, if they are good friends with other vendors, it may be difficult to make decisions fairly and without bias.

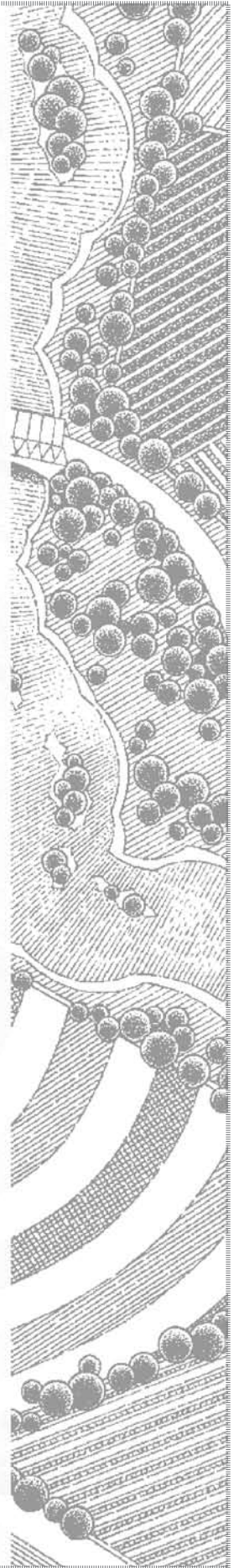
Vendor-only boards can also face difficulties if the vendor members are too busy during market season to attend to larger issues. Furthermore, as one manager stated, "Farmers are not bureaucrats. I have a hard enough time getting them to fill out paperwork, let alone attend meetings and participate in strategic planning." Boards composed entirely of vendors may rely more strongly on the manager to build community relations since most vendors will not live in town or possess non-profit management skills. In some cases, the manager may end up directing the board rather than the other way around. With no community representation, the board may have a more difficult time understanding the issues and needs of the local community.

Finally, if vendor board members are selling at more than one market, they may be too busy to focus on their board duties. In some cases, they may rarely attend the market, sending an employee instead, which gives them little connection to the market's day-to-day issues.

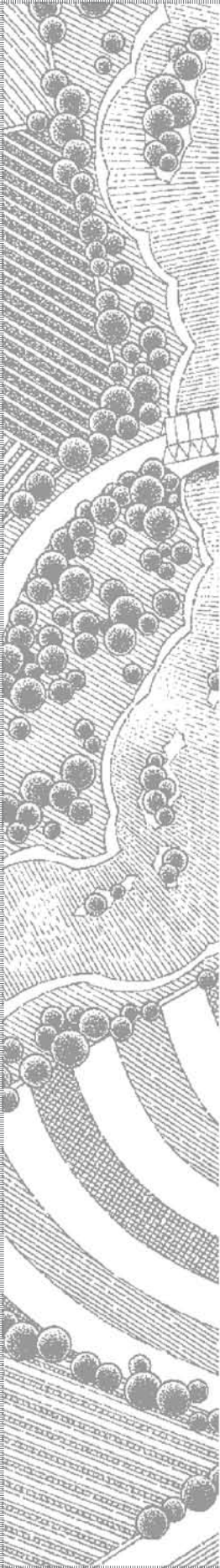
### **A Combination of Vendors and Community Members**

Another common type of board is one that is made up of a mix of market vendors and representatives of the local community. Board members bring with them various strengths, such as legal or financial expertise, well-developed ties to the business or political community, and strong marketing and publicity skills. A board can maximize its effectiveness by paying careful attention to the assets of each member and developing a complementary and well-rounded mix of individuals.

Furthermore, this type of board not only offers representation and awareness of vendor issues but also reflects the diverse interests in the community. Board members who are local residents will be more attuned to issues that may affect the market and can potentially be more connected to the resources that will assure the market a strong position in the community.







On the other hand, board members who are less familiar with the realities of farming and direct marketing will have to pay extra attention to the concerns of vendors and make sure that the plans and policies they implement reflect the needs of the vendors. A common complaint is that board members who have prestige and power in the community but who are not well-versed in the organization they guide are “out of touch.” As one board chairperson said, “The diversity of the board is our greatest strength and our greatest weakness. The challenge is to live with the conflict that diversity brings.”

### **Organizationally Driven Boards**

A third type of governing board comes from the nonprofit or local business organizations that often oversee farmers markets, such as downtown improvement districts and community development organizations. Markets sponsored by these types of organizations may have boards that have little connection to the people directly involved in the market. For example, a market may have a board composed entirely of business owners from the downtown area where the market is located, providing no vendor representation whatsoever. As one manager said, “Our board members connect us to the downtown district really well, but they do not shop at our market.”

These boards may have the benefit of substantial expertise that members bring and well-developed ties to the local business community. In this case, it often falls to the market manager to ensure that vendor interests are well represented and that communication between the board and vendors remains open. The potential exists for vendors to feel that the decision-making process is beyond their control even though they depend to some degree on the board for the success of the market. Vendor investment in the market may also be more difficult to achieve if the infrastructure does not include them in the larger issues of the organization.

### **Responsibilities of the Board of Directors**

The purpose of a board of directors is to provide vision and direction to an organization. The board can help shape the market and its performance in many ways, including strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, public relations, and promotions. Boards of directors generally consist of several officers (chairpersons, cochairs, secretaries, treasurers) whose positions are defined in the bylaws. The manager may or may not be a voting member of the board.

## Farmers Market Management Skills

In theory, the board works closely with the market manager to assist in the development and implementation of long-range plans as well as day-to-day activities. In reality, the level of board involvement in farmers markets depends on the way the board is structured, its relationship with the manager, and the time, assets, and strengths the individual members bring to the board.



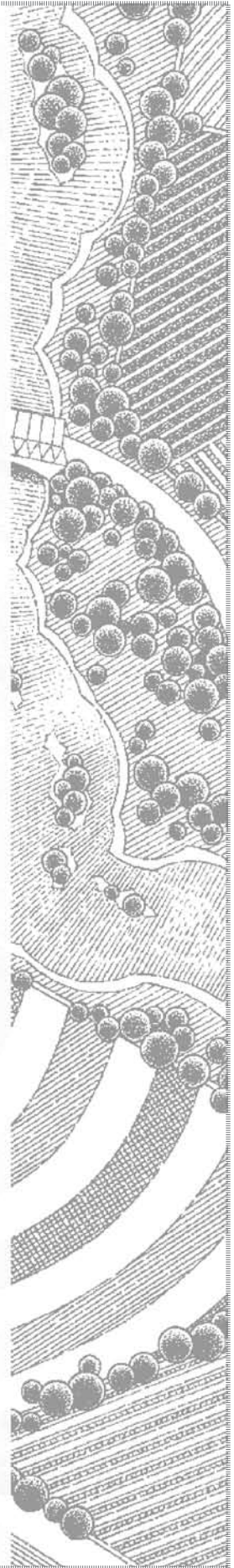
The responsibilities of the board vary from market to market but may include:

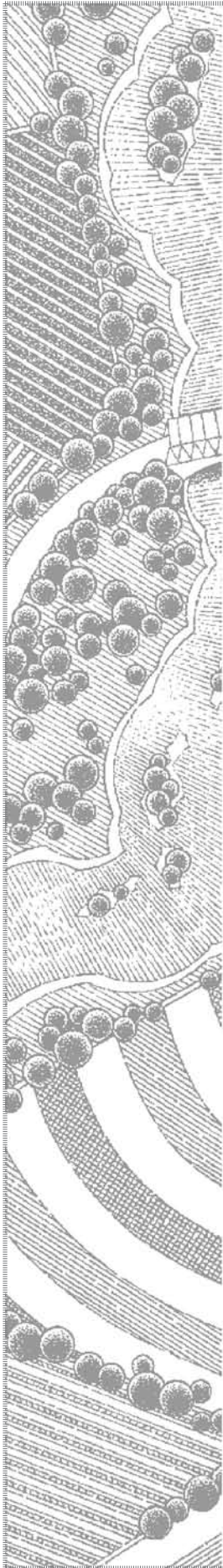
- ▣ Long-range planning and goal-setting.
- ▣ Setting policies and fees for the year.
- ▣ Developing the market bylaws and mission statement.
- ▣ Establishing an annual budget.
- ▣ Providing direction to the manager.
- ▣ Supporting the manager in situations of conflict and intervening when necessary.
- ▣ Making major staffing decisions.
- ▣ Promotions and marketing.
- ▣ Fundraising.
- ▣ Recruiting new vendors.

Responsibilities assumed by the board fall into two general categories: governance and support. Governance refers to the broad-based, policy-making responsibilities that address the benefits and services the organization provides. Support refers to day-to-day responsibilities conducted through committees or on an individual basis that further the goals of the organization. The Board Responsibility Matrix on the next page outlines the different roles that board members traditionally fulfill.

### **Clarifying the Purpose, Role, and Responsibilities of the Board**

All leadership models have strengths and weaknesses. The main criterion for judging the model is the extent to which your board meets the needs of your market and your community. The function and organization of your board will emerge in some form from the initiating purpose of the market. For example, a market primarily initiated by several farmers as a way to market their produce is more likely to have a vendor-driven board than one initiated by a neighborhood organization that is focused on revitalizing its community. Boards of directors often reflect the





The Board Responsibility Matrix	
The board acts to <b>GOVERN</b> the organization	The board acts to <b>SUPPORT</b> the organization
<b>Objectives</b>	
To represent the community's interests within the organization.	To represent the organization's interests in the community.
<b>Process for Action</b>	
The board acts as a body.	Board members act as individuals or through committees.
<b>Responsibilities</b>	
<p><b>Determine mission and purpose.</b></p> <p><b>Legal:</b> Ensure compliance with federal, state and local regulations and fulfillment of contractual obligations.</p> <p><b>Financial:</b> Safeguard assets from misuse, waste, and embezzlement.</p> <p><b>Staff:</b> Select and monitor staff and evaluate their performance.</p> <p><b>Planning:</b> Determine strategies and overall priorities.</p> <p><b>Programs:</b> Determine the organization's program priorities, monitor implementation, and conduct evaluations to measure impact.</p> <p><b>Efficiency and impact:</b> Ensure a realistic budget that maximizes resources.</p>	<p><b>Fundraising:</b> Develop fundraising strategy; ensure adequate resources by raising funds and assisting staffing in raising funds.</p> <p><b>Public relations and community contacts:</b> Act as ambassadors to the community on behalf of the organization and its clients.</p> <p><b>Volunteer recruitment and volunteering.</b></p> <p><b>Act as individual advisors:</b> advise staff in areas of expertise; act as sounding board for executive director and other executive staff.</p> <p><b>Lend names, personal credibility and reputation</b> to the organization for use in brochures, grant proposals, and other formats.</p>

The Support Center for Nonprofit Management, *Workshop for Effective Non-profit Boards of Directors*, San Francisco, California.

### Guidelines for Establishing Board Conduct

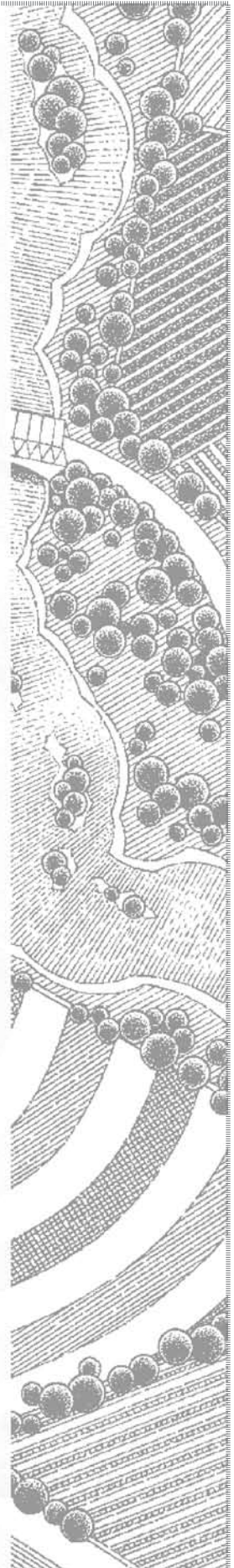
The Southland Farmers Market Association in Los Angeles recommends using the following policies as guidelines for establishing board conduct:

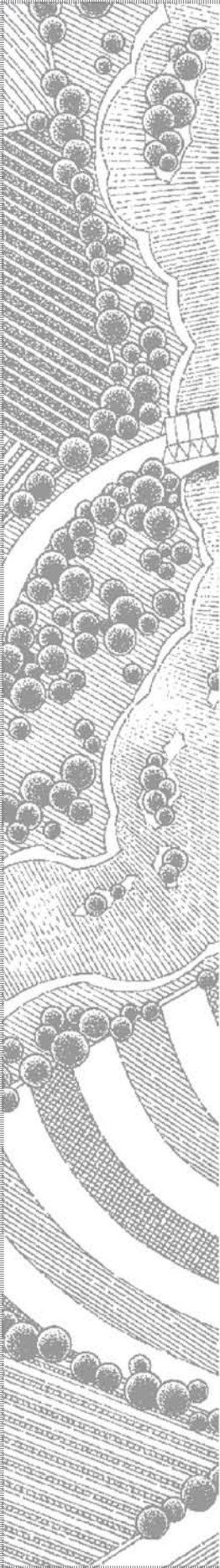
- Each board member is a fiduciary. He or she must act in good faith and with full honesty for the benefit of the market association.
- Each board member has a duty to subordinate personal interests to the common good of the market association and must fully disclose any direct or indirect personal interest in board action.
- Because acts of mismanagement can frequently be avoided by attendance, it is the responsibility of each board member to attend all board meetings.
- Minutes of all board meetings must be recorded and approved. Board members should express and record in the minutes their disapproval of any board action.
- Board officers must have the ability to understand financial statements, file all legally required reports in a timely manner, and report to the board of directors on a regular basis.
- Each member must exercise care in investigating the accuracy of subordinates' reports. Any obvious signs of employee misconduct must be reported to the board immediately.
- Board members should limit their actions to those defined by the rules and regulations.

overall intent behind the market's creation.

If your market is in the start-up phase, you have an opportunity to decide if you want an advisory board or a participating board. An advisory board provides broad policy support but is guided by the market manager. In this case, the manager develops policies and procedures and receives feedback from the board. A participating board, on the other hand, is much more involved in market operations and decision-making. It provides a higher degree of direction to the manager and is more closely involved in day-to-day issues at the market.

The effectiveness of any model of board leadership depends to a great extent on the understanding of board members of their purpose, roles, responsibilities, and relationship to the manager. Take time to discuss with all the board members and the staff the role that each individual plays and the role of the manager and of the board as a collec-





tive body. The board should make your work easier, not harder. If you find that you are taking on more than your job description entails or that the board is directing in name only, you may want to raise the issue at the next board meeting and discuss strategies to increase board involvement.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined various types of boards and their strengths and weaknesses plus the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors. In the next chapter, you will learn strategies for strengthening and working more effectively with your market's board of directors.



## Market Leadership: Strengthening Your Board of Directors

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Understand the challenges of leadership in a farmers market.
- ▶ Choose strategies to strengthen your board of directors.

The board-staff relationship is a paradoxical one. When acting in a governing role, the board must stand above staff and be the “boss.” But when acting in a supporting role, board members must act to support and assist staff-led work. Some board members become so excited about their role as governors that they mistake governance for close supervision of management and begin meddling in minor management affairs. In other cases, as boards govern more, they shirk their supporting role. The challenge is to fulfill both roles, not simply switch from one to the other. (The Support Center for Nonprofit Management, *The Paradox and the Challenge: Practical Ways to Strengthen Governance*, San Francisco, California.)

### The Manager and the Board: Who leads Whom?

One of the most often cited challenges in market leadership is defining the roles of board members and their relation to the manager and staff of the market. How much direction the manager receives from the board can be critical to the market, depending on the skills, experience, and initiative of the manager. For example, one manager described a situation in which a hands-off board looked away as an inexperienced manager destroyed relationships with many people in the community, including the city agency that allowed the market to use its space. The manager was rude to potential new vendors, failed to return phone calls to the city, and neglected many of the communication responsibilities of the job. In the end, the market lost its location and was barely saved by another manager stepping in to take over. In this case, a strong, active board could have intervened to change the course of events and guide the manager in a more constructive way.

In many cases, however, it is the market manager who frames issues for the board and gets their support. Essentially, the manager leads the board. In this situation, it takes extra effort and time for the manager to give the board direction instead of the other way around. The problem with this type of governance is that an unskilled manager can easily run amok and do great damage to the market. Ef-

## Farmers Market Management Skills

fectively, only one person is making decisions instead of an organized governing body providing checks and balances.

Poorly defined roles between the manager/staff and the board can also lead to power struggles and resentment. For instance, one board member described a situation in which the market staff began to run the board meetings, having become accustomed to making most decisions and taking on the vast majority of market responsibilities. "The board has a common vision of what the community is and what the market is, but the logistics and the work of what that means relies on the work of only one or two board members and the staff." After the meeting, board members were angry because they felt their authority had been undermined and the staff were resentful and felt unappreciated.

Ideally, a manager should not take over in response to a lack of support from the board. The manager should address the situation and make the relationship more effective. Managing a farmers market is not something one person should do alone and the board should be there to help you.

### Strengthening Your Board

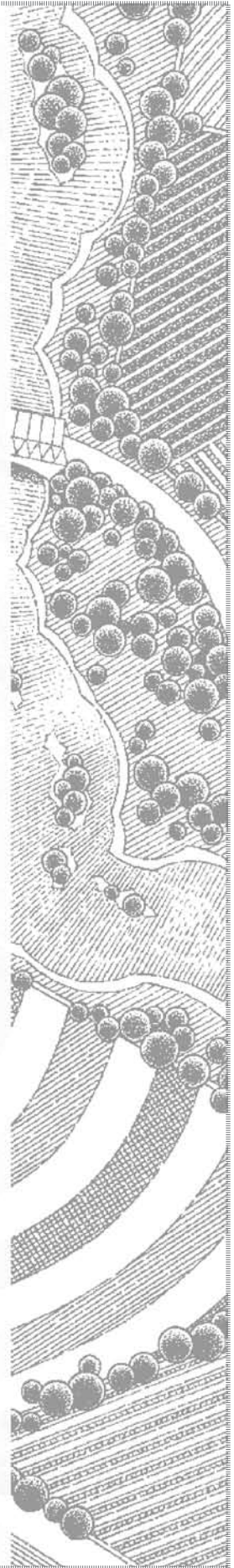
Ideally, board members are chosen for their leadership qualities, vision, and skill and work together effectively to direct and support the market manager. In reality, that is not always the case, and it falls to the manager to take the initiative to strengthen the board. Following are some strategies for managers to develop the skills and effectiveness of the board of directors.

#### Create a Collective Vision

A board member who has been involved with the market for three days or three years should be invested in the success of the market. Make sure that your board members have a collective vision of the history, purpose, direction, and objectives of the market.

#### Work on Communication

Keep communication lines open. Keep minutes of your meetings and distribute them to every board member afterward. Some markets use newsletters or memos to provide information to all board members. Occasionally, hold a retreat as an opportunity for members to get to know each other better in a different context. Facilitated activities, whether for one hour or one day, can help build team unity.







### Be Proactive

No matter how wonderful things may look now, keep working on strengthening your board. You want to be a strong functional team when challenges arise. When times are easy, take care of some of those things that have been neglected. Do the bylaws need to be updated? Do you have a strategic plan for the next few years? There will always be something to do to make your market stronger.

### Prioritize

You and your board will not be able to accomplish all of the great ideas that arise at meetings. As a group, prioritize what is most important and follow through on those things. It is important to be realistic about what you can accomplish.

### Thinking about the Future of Your Board

Over time, your board will change as members leave, retire, or become too busy to continue in their leadership role. Use this transition time as a way to strengthen your board. The typical board recruitment process focuses on filling vacancies for the following year only. However, part of your long-range plan should include a strategy for developing your board over the next several years. Such a plan should consider the following questions (Frank Marinelli, "Encouraging Visionary Board Leadership," *Nonprofit World*, 6(4) 1998:11–14.):

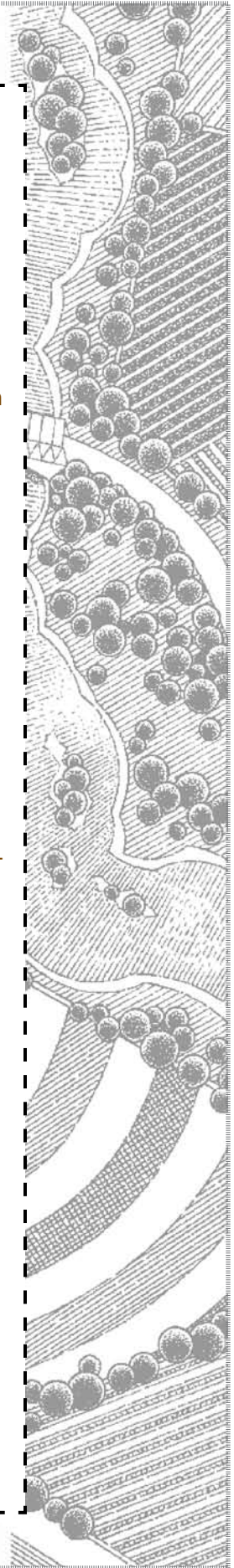
- Who will lead and serve the board over the next five years?
- What skills, knowledge, and other attributes would strengthen the board?
- What is our plan to scout leadership talent for the future?
- How will we go about fostering and developing future board leadership?

Use these questions to devise a board development process. Consider forming a committee to focus specifically on this process. Taking the time to strategically plan for the composition, responsibilities, and overall assets of your board leadership will result in a board that complements and strengthens the work you do. All of these things together will build a stronger market.

### Four Ideas for Recruiting New Board Members

- Form a One-Meeting Nominating Committee. Draw up a list of twenty well-connected people of the sort you would want on the board but who you suspect would not join (but who might know someone who would be a good board member). Call those twenty people and ask them to come to a one-meeting committee over lunch. Tell them that at the lunch they will be told more about the organization and what it is looking for in board members. At the end of lunch, ask them simply for the name of one person they think would be a good board member. The day after the lunch, call each of the nominees and begin by explaining who nominated them.
- Take out a “Help Wanted—Volunteer Board Member” ad in the neighborhood newsletter or alumni newsletter of a local college. Example: “HELP SOUTH PARK . . . We are looking for a few talented and conscientious volunteer board members to help us guide our programs into the next century. If you can contribute one evening a month and have skills or contacts in accounting, publicity, or special-event fundraising, call to find out more about whether this volunteer opportunity is right for you.”
- Ask the manager or volunteer coordinator if there are two or three hands-on volunteers who would make good board members. Hands-on volunteers bring both demonstrated commitment AND an intimate knowledge of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses. Volunteers, donors, and customers should be the first place you look. You do not have to “sell” the agency—they know it already!
- Pick four local organizations in which you do not know anyone would like to (examples: NAACP, Japanese American Citizens League, Accountants for the Public Interest). Tip: Your local Yahoo site ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)) is a good place to look for lists under “Community.” Ask each officer to call one of the four local organizations and ask to have coffee with the board president or manager. Over coffee, suggest that your two organizations recommend “retiring” board members to each other as a way of establishing organizational links and strengthening ties among communities.

The Support Center for Nonprofit Management, *Board Café*, 2(6) 1998.



### Characteristics of Visionary Board Leaders

Use this list to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your board.

- They are visionary and future-focused, spending most of their decision-making time looking forward.
- They possess an entrepreneurial spirit, understanding that their organization operates in a fast changing market place and seeking products and services to meet emerging customer needs.
- They are risk-takers who balance the need to take chances with traditional stewardship responsibilities of board service.
- They are good communicators who understand the importance of communication at all levels and organize the board and its committees accordingly.
- They are systems thinkers, seeking the root causes of issues they face.
- They discover creative ways to connect their organization to the world around them, exploring new partnerships and alliances that support their mission's strategic plan.
- They value diversity, understanding that it promotes creativity, innovation, organizational learning, and responsiveness to customers.

— Frank Marinelli,  
"Encouraging Visionary Board Leadership,"  
*Nonprofit World*, 16(4) 1998:11–14.)

### Conclusion

Although it is the board's job to direct and support the farmers market manager and the manager's job to implement the board's decisions and report to the board, in actuality farmers market leadership is more complex than that simple description implies. As manager, you may be the only person with the experience or time to devote to formally developing the business and leadership of the market; to receive effective direction and the support you need, you may have to take the initiative to strengthen your board of directors.



# 6

## Maintaining Positive Relations with Vendors

**This chapter will enable you to:**

- ▶ **Be aware of the role of the manager and the market in the success of vendors.**
- ▶ **Be aware of actions you can take to maintain and strengthen positive relationships with vendors.**

**D**eveloping and maintaining good relations with your vendors is essential to the stability of the market. Satisfied vendors are likely to be loyal, remaining with the market or returning season after season, creating consistency of product for the market. Vendors develop relationships with customers, who come back week after week to buy specific items from their favorite farmers. Vendors also are more likely to get involved in the market on a larger level and take part in the decision-making process. Conversely, dissatisfied vendors undermine a market's stability and success. Vendors who feel like they are being treated unfairly or that the manager is not doing enough to help their business at the market may leave and the entire market will suffer. Even if they do not leave, they may complain among themselves and hurt morale. This chapter addresses the key points in managing relations with vendors.

### The Role of the Manager and the Market in the Success of Vendors

Your responsibility to the vendors is to create a business environment in which they can successfully market their products. All of the work you do in public relations, accounting, and keeping track of regulations is ultimately focused on developing and maintaining that place where vendors bring their goods and make a living selling them. How you communicate with the vendors, how you apply the rules, how you handle conflict, and the tone you set for the market are critical to the overall health of the market.



## Farmers Market Management Skills

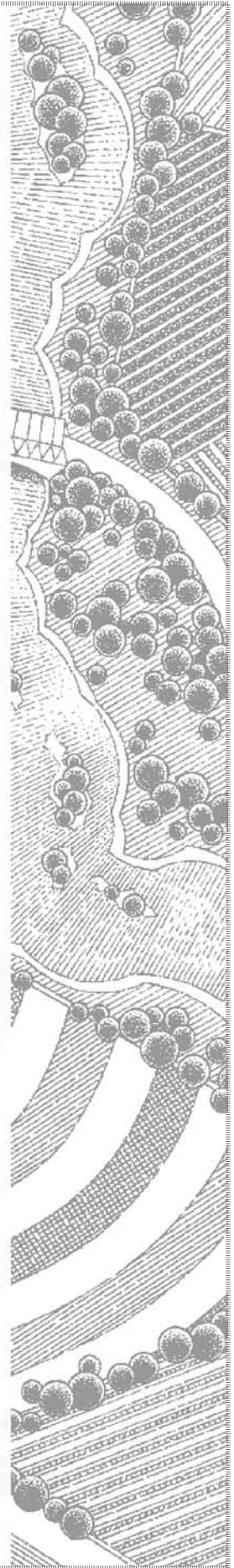
The relationship between the market manager and vendor can be a complicated one. The manager may be charged with the task of telling vendors what they can and cannot do. The manager may decide who gets a particular space at the market, which produce a vendor can sell, and even who is allowed into the market as a vendor. The manager may also enforce rules and regulations that have been established by a wide variety of agencies and organizations, including the farmers market itself. At the same time, the manager has a good deal of potential to help vendors with their business at the market by promoting their products, analyzing sales trends and providing feedback, and developing the market as a whole.

The stability of the market is crucial to a farmer who has, to some degree, planned production around the sales expected at the market. The farmer can easily be put in a vulnerable position if the market is managed poorly and the number of customers declines, if competition between vendors selling similar products is too intense, if a stall space is taken away, or if the rules and regulations of the market are unfair or poorly designed. To complicate matters, some farmers markets have a high turnover rate among managers, creating discontinuity and a breakdown in communication between vendors and the manager. These situations have the potential to impact the vendors' ability to market their products and earn their livelihoods.

The manager's responsibility to the vendors, then, is to make it possible for them to do business successfully.

### **Strategies and Actions to Maintain and Strengthen Relations with Vendors**

There are a number of concrete steps you can take to build positive relationships with the vendors at your market. Discussed in detail in the following pages, those steps include knowing your farmers, maintaining open communication, and setting the right tone for the market.



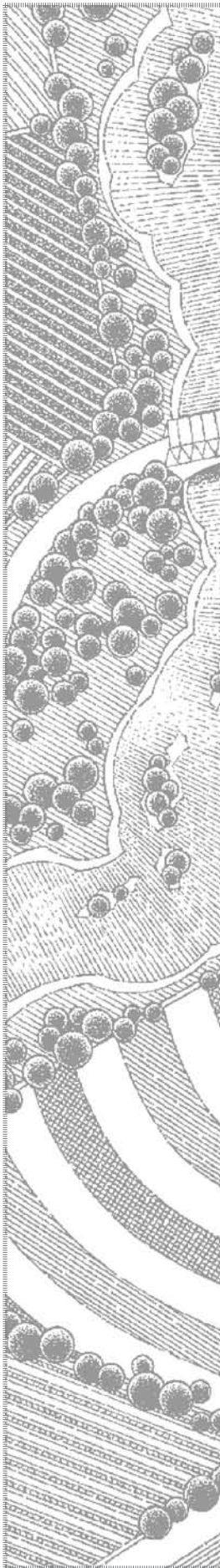
## Know Your Farmers

Being a farmer is different from many other types of jobs. Farming is a lifestyle as much as a job, one that involves working long hours of the day and night every day. Often several members of the family as well as several employees are involved in making the farm run. The goods that they bring to the market represent much more than a product that was manufactured somewhere or purchased wholesale from a distributor. They are the result of a great deal of the hard work on which their livelihoods rely. It is important to get to know the farmers at your market so you can develop a good working relationship with them. Visit their farms if you can; find out something about their lives. At the very least, know what crops they grow, what methods of farming they use, and how many acres they farm. Spend an afternoon selling produce with a farmer at the market. Learn what his or her day is like from that side of the table.

Knowing about your vendors and what they supply will help you plan for your market and identify gaps in products for which you will have to find additional vendors. It will also help you to promote particular items (promotion is discussed in detail in the third volume in the series, *Growing Your Farmers Market*).

The Southland Farmers Market Association in Los Angeles recommends asking new farmers the following questions to gain an understanding of their business.

- Crops – What kinds of crops and other products do you raise?
- Seasons – Exactly when do specific crops mature in your area?
- Experience – Have you thought of growing any other crops for increased variety?
- Marketing – How do you usually move your crop? Do you have a stand as well?
- Volume – How much acreage do you have in production?
- Familiarity – Have you talked to other farmers in the area who sell at these markets?
- Practicality – Are there other markets in the county at which you would like to sell?
- Testing – What volume would you need to sell to interest you in selling at this market?



## Farmers Market Management Skills

Farmers who are new to selling at farmers markets may need some assistance initially to help them develop the best way to display and promote their products. Supporting new vendors does more than help them learn the ropes and generate adequate income from their sales. Vendors' success is also an asset to the market as a whole. Support for new vendors can include tips on displaying products, customer relations, signage, market rules and regulations, and how to offer samples for customers. Some markets offer reduced stall fees for new vendors to take some of the pressure off during their first market season. Personal communication between the manager and the vendor is also important to help vendors understand the rules and overall "climate" of the market.

### Know Farming in Your Area

In addition to knowing your individual farmers, you should know about agriculture as well. If you are not already familiar with farming, you should make every effort to learn enough about agriculture to understand the issues your vendors face. This includes the seasons in which their crops are available, the produce's desired level of quality, and external problems such as weather that affect the produce grown for your market.

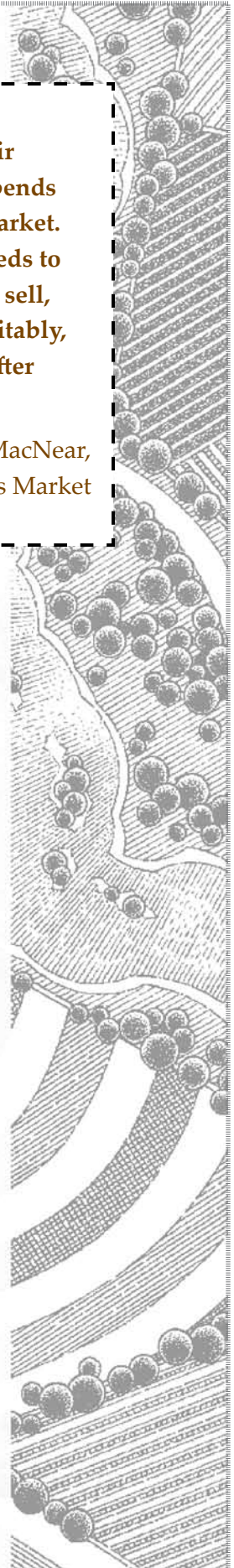
This information can help you in many ways. Most importantly, it helps you communicate more easily with your farmers. If you do not understand the impact of a freeze on a citrus crop or a drought on corn, you will have a hard time dealing with the inevitable agricultural disasters and their effects on your market.

### Maintain Open Communication

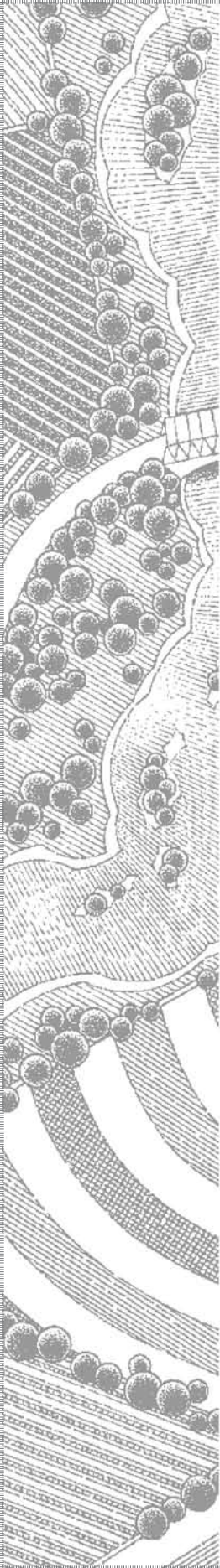
Developing good relationships with your vendors is an ongoing process. As in any relationship, you cannot ignore a relationship and hope that it continues to go well. Simple gestures can go a long way toward making vendors feel valued at the market. John Silveira and Vince Scalise of the Pacific Coast Farmers Market

**Many farmers are very vulnerable to market management and are very distrustful since their livelihood—where they move their crops—depends on whether a manager will let them into the market. There are certain basics that a market seller needs to feel secure—knowing that they have a place to sell, that they are going to be treated fairly and equitably, that they have their space to go back to week after week.**

—Randii MacNear,  
Manager of the Davis, California Farmers Market







Association suggest greeting vendors when they arrive at the market in the morning; many will have already put in several hours of work and driving time, and they may arrive feeling anxious or stressed. The manager can help vendors feel positive about the market and about interacting with customers by setting a positive tone with a brief, positive greeting. If you can, say goodbye to them at the end of the market. Thank them for their work.

Create ways for vendors to communicate with you about the market. Offer free coffee to all vendors at the market manager's booth or table. Encourage vendors to come by and talk with you at some point during the day. These types of conversations help maintain consistent communication and give the manager and the vendors a chance to get to know each other better. They are also a great opportunity to find out what issues the vendors may have with the market. Inviting vendors to participate in the market as board members or on committees is another good way to keep the communication lines open.

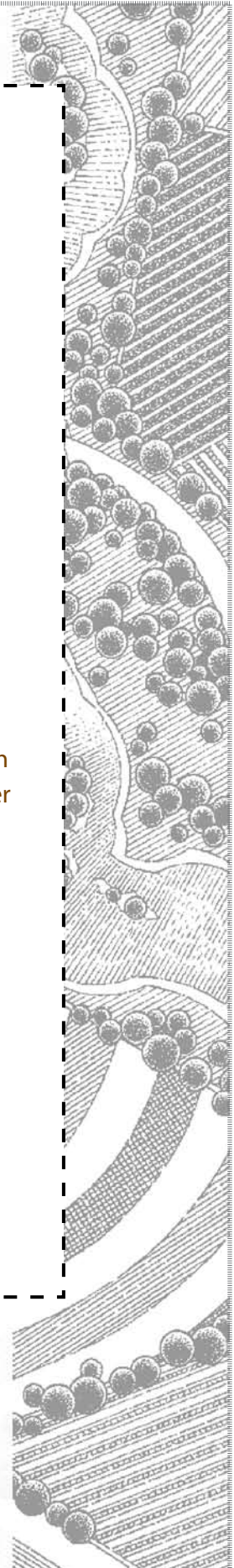
According to Dan Kuebler of Columbia Farmers Market in Missouri, "The problem we are having right now is trying to figure out how to hear all the growers. It is really difficult because most of the growers, for the most part, are just concerned about having a place to sell and if the cost is reasonable. Beyond that, they do not have a lot of energy. They are out of town, they are not close enough to communicate a lot, and a lot of these folks do not have email. I do not have email so it is difficult. But they are not shy about talking when you ask them or talk to them at the market. That seems to be the best place. I think through the years that is sort of how I myself, as a board member, have heard a lot of voices—at the market. Maybe I am not selling that day and I can go around and talk to people and hear a variety of ideas. Some of the ideas are just off the wall, you know. They are not based in reality. But you have to listen to all of them because somewhere in there is a common thread. There is no magic formula other than keep talking, keep listening, and do not stop with that."

- **Gather information.** It is a good idea to survey your vendors on a regular basis. This can be informal, such as when you walk through the market to deliver load sheets. Ask them how things are going. Find out if they have any suggestions about how to improve the market or any complaints. You can also do a more formal printed survey that you hand out to each vendor once or twice a year.
- **Evaluations.** You may want to periodically ask your vendors to evaluate the market, including how it is managed. They should be able to do this anonymously to encourage their open and honest feedback. Give each vendor an evaluation form that they can complete without identifying

**Sample Vendor Survey**

- How many years have you operated a stall at this market? \_\_\_\_\_
- What products do you sell at this market?
  - fruit and vegetables     bakery goods     meat, poultry or fish
  - flowers     spices     other nonfood items
- Of the products you sell at the market, what percent do you grow or make? \_\_\_\_\_%
- During what months of the year do you to sell at this market?
  - year-round     from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the average dollar amount per transaction at your stall? \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Compared to the supermarket you visit most often, this market is

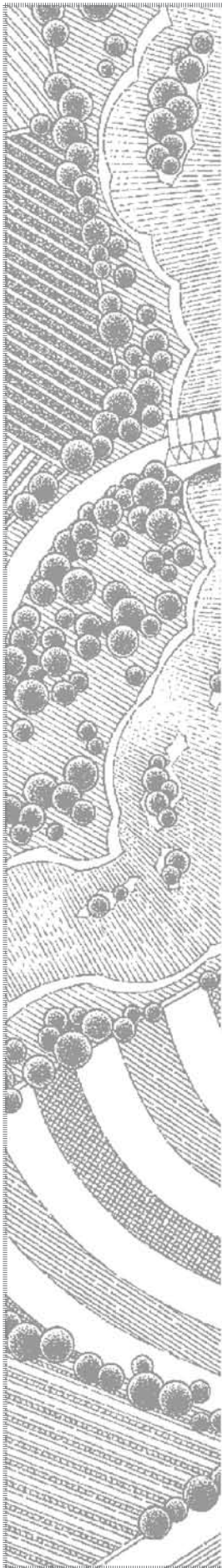
	Much Worse			About the Same				Much Better		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a. Quality of products	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
b. Variety of products	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
c. General price level of products	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
d. Cleanliness of market	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
e. Friendliness of employees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
f. Availability of lunch/refreshments	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
g. Parking facilities	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
h. Availability of special foods	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—



themselves and make a summary of the results of the evaluation available to them.

Once you have gathered input from the vendors, it is important to respond to the information they have given you. Make it clear that you have heard what they had to say and answer their questions or take action on things that can be easily addressed. If someone has a problem for which you do not immediately have an answer or cannot solve right away, make sure they know you are not ignoring it.

- **Newsletters and memos.** While surveys are a good way for you to find out how your vendors are doing, you need to be able to effectively disseminate information back to vendors on a regular basis. Many managers use memos that are easily hand written or computer generated and photocopied and/or newsletters to regularly communicate with vendors. These types of documents ensure that everyone receives the same information. If you have vendors who do not read English, make sure that the information gets to them in a language they understand, either by telling them personally or having someone translate the information for you.
- **Bulletin boards.** A well-placed bulletin board is another good way to communicate with vendors. Getting vendors into the habit of checking the board at each market for important news and events related to the market will save you a great deal of time otherwise spent explaining things individually.
- **Annual meetings.** Annual meetings are a useful way to get everyone involved in the market together in one place. Use this time to go over policies and procedures, report on the successes of the market, and discuss upcoming events and short- and long-range goals. Some markets make attendance at these meetings mandatory to encourage maximum participation. Vendors who do not attend run the risk of losing stall space at the market as well as their voting privileges on market issues. However, this strategy can easily backfire, especially in areas with year-round markets if vendors are committed to attending another market at the same time. It can be very difficult to schedule an annual meeting that will allow all vendors to attend. Other markets use the meetings as a time to reflect on the



market over the past year, update vendors on new regulations, or provide some training on a topic such as improved marketing procedures.

- **End of year celebrations.** Do not forget to celebrate your accomplishments. The end of the market season is a good time to get people together to recognize all the hard work they have done and reflect on the successes of the market.

### Set the Right Tone

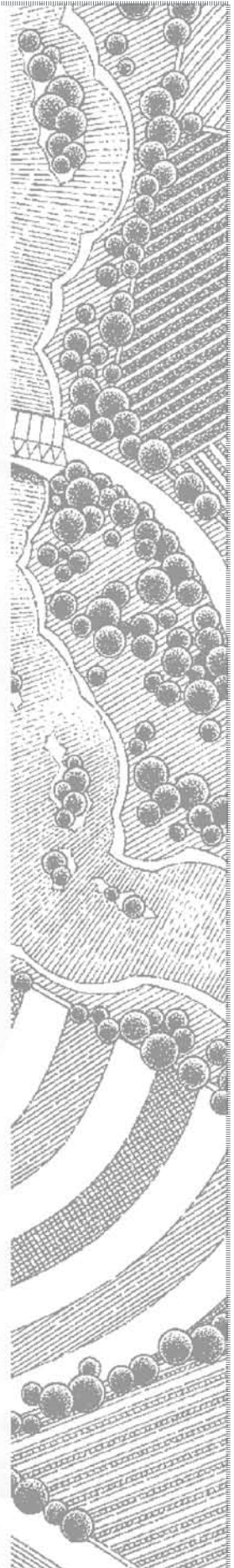
The role you play in the communication process is an extremely important part of establishing the tone of the market as a whole. As manager, you are responsible for establishing lines of communication and the general atmosphere regarding how information is passed back and forth between you and the vendors. Following are some tips for setting a positive tone for the market.

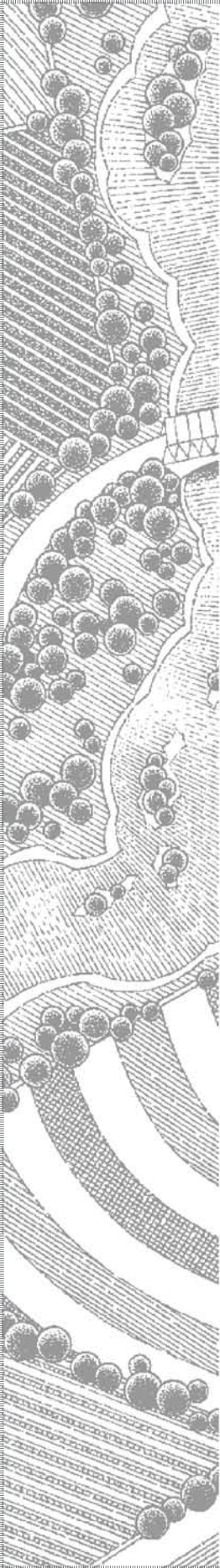
**Make yourself available.** All of the vendors certainly know who you are, but do they feel comfortable approaching you with questions? Are you available during the market, which is likely to be the easiest time for them to talk to you? If you give off a “do not bug me, I’m busy” attitude, chances are you will miss some valuable opportunities to answer questions, address problems, and make connections that can help avoid conflict and miscommunication down the road. Being visible and approachable, especially during market hours, will help you maintain better communication with vendors.

**Be friendly and respectful.** Again, your attitude sets the tone for the market. If you are rude to the vendors, it establishes an environment in which people feel free to treat each other and you disrespectfully.

**Be patient with new vendors.** New vendors and vendors who have not participated in the market for some time will not automatically know all the rules. Avoid giving preferential treatment to more established vendors because they are easier to deal with. Take time to explain the rules to new vendors and make them feel valued in the market.

**Get vendors involved.** Encourage vendors to actively participate in the larger organization of the market. Many times, farmers are too busy to offer much time volunteering, but take advantage of small opportunities to get them involved. Building vendor participation into the administration of the market through positions on the board of directors or on subcommittees and voting privileges will increase their investment in the market as a whole.





**Create a team atmosphere.** Kas Gurtler, manager of the Jefferson County farmers markets in Port Townsend, Washington notes that “We work hard to get all the vendors to work together and realize that they will not have personal success unless the market is successful as a whole. We have to do this together and be one entity. The manager has got to be strong to get all the vendors to work together, but also compassionate enough to realize that he or she can be wrong about something.”

Let the vendors know that you do this not just for a paycheck—that you really are concerned about the success of the market and the success of their businesses. Keep track of how vendors’ sales are doing and congratulate them if you see a significant improvement. If sales are falling for someone, ask that vendor if you can do anything to help. Let them know that you are aware of their business developments and interested in helping them make improvements where necessary.

### **Conclusion**

Much of a market manager’s time and energy goes into creating and maintaining positive relationships with vendors. Occasionally, however, you will need to manage conflict with vendors, and the next chapter addresses ways to manage and resolve conflicts.



## Managing Conflict with Vendors

The previous chapter dealt with building positive relationships with vendors in your market and with understanding and paying attention to your vendors' needs, the value of open communication, and how to set a positive tone. Most of your interactions with vendors are likely to be positive. Inevitably, however, conflicts will arise at your market. Chapter Ten deals with conflict resolution in general while this chapter deals specifically with conflict between the manager and vendors. If you feel frustrated by unhappy vendors who complain to you about other vendors, the way you do your job, or a lack of sales at the market, you are not alone. Unfortunately, this is one situation where you will never please 100 percent of the people 100 percent of the time.

**This chapter will enable you to:**

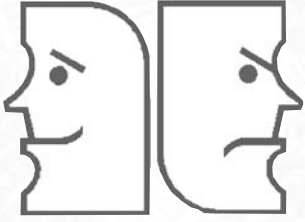
- ▶ **Put conflict in perspective and analyze sources of conflict.**
- ▶ **Be aware of ways to prevent conflicts from arising.**
- ▶ **Be aware of strategies for managing, minimizing, and resolving conflicts when they do arise.**

### Sources of Conflict with Vendors

Typically, farmers are self-employed and accustomed to running their own businesses. But in the context of the market, farmers are under the authority of the market manager, creating a potentially challenging situation for the manager. If a market has twenty vendors, it will have twenty different personalities at the market each day as each vendor tries to make a living at least partly through market sales. The manager must be able to deal with all of these different people equitably and with respect no matter how difficult it may be.

Managers often find that in any group of vendors there are a few who are always unhappy no matter what you do to please them. They may accuse you of not doing enough to help their sales regardless of the fact that vendors on either side of them are doing a healthy amount of business. And, more dangerously, they may walk through the market telling other vendors what they think you are doing wrong. They may try to persuade others that you are not a good manager, that you are overpaid, that you do not really care about the success of the market, etc.

These few have the potential to occupy a great deal of your time and energy. In such a situation where it seems that there is always something wrong no matter what you do, it is important to be clear about the source of the conflict. For ex-

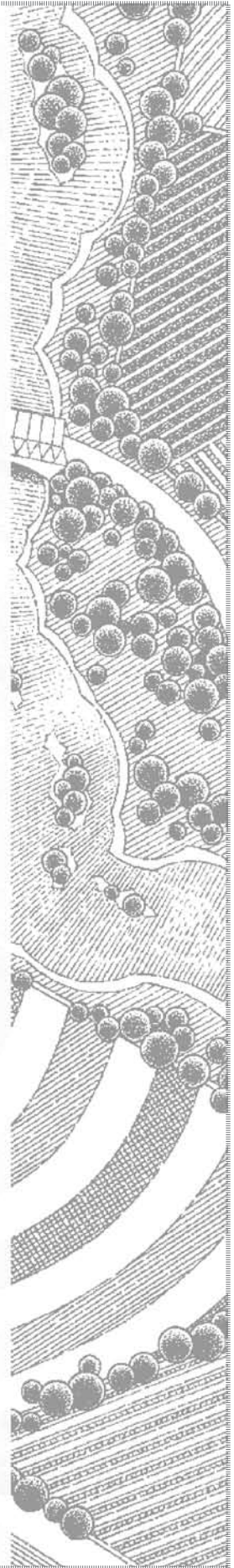


ample, if sales are dropping throughout the market and customer numbers are declining, it would be worth your time to seriously investigate the reasons behind these changes. If, however, one or two vendors are consistently unhappy because their sales are low but everyone else is doing very well, it may be that the problem is actually coming from

the vendors and is not the result of some major shift in the overall success of the market. To be sure about the source of the problem, you need to be familiar with data about your market's success. In this situation, you could compare sales figures over the past few months and to the same time the previous year to get a better identify the source of the problem. Show this information to your vendors as well so they better understand what is going on. Perhaps their sales people are giving the wrong signals to customers by reading on the job or sitting with their backs to the stand. Maybe the stall is set up in an unattractive manner. Whatever the case, it is important to identify the root of the problem and make suggestions for improvement so you do not have to spend more energy than is necessary trying to appease one or two unhappy vendors. Look for ways to turn the conflict into a question of evidence rather than an opinion or issue of personality. If you know that you have done that and the conflict persists, the problem may rest with the vendor rather than the relationship or some other solvable problem, which case your best strategy may be simply to detach and be sure you are not contributing to any escalation of the conflict.

### **Do Not Let Problems Go Unresolved**

An atmosphere of suspicion or outright hostility that is not addressed will likely grow in severity. It is important to address problems in a straightforward and timely manner. If you know that a vendor is consistently walking through the market and saying negative things about you, take that person aside and get them to talk to you about what they think is wrong. Make sure not to embarrass vendors by reprimanding them or discussing private matters in front of others. This can exacerbate the problem. Try to hear what they are saying and see if there is a larger issue influencing their behavior. Make a plan with that person to address the problem and follow through on whatever you decide to do. You will not be able to please every person all of the time, but treating people with respect and making an honest effort to resolve conflicts will make your job much easier.





## Have a Policy and Stick to It

A good market manager should have the skills needed to resolve conflicts in a way that is clear, fair, and effective. It is up to the decision-making body of your market, whether that is the manager acting alone or in conjunction with a board of directors or an advisory committee, to establish a mechanism for resolving conflict. However you decide to do this, the mechanism should be clearly written in the bylaws for the market and explained to each vendor before they begin selling at the market. Make sure every vendor gets a copy of the bylaws and signs it. This plan must include a mechanism by which vendors can file grievances. The bylaws should make it as simple and clear as possible for problems to be brought to the table and resolved.



For example, for the Carrboro Farmers Market in Carrboro, North Carolina, the board establishes all of the rules and regulations for the market, which are then put to a vote of the members, and is responsible for hearing and resolving complaints. The market manager handles day-to-day operation of the market and is effectively left out of serious conflicts. At the same time, the manager is trained in conflict resolution skills so

that he can successfully de-escalate problems. As a consequence, many issues never make it to the board. The manager may make recommendations to the board, but all decisions are made by the larger group, creating a relatively neutral position for the manager. Further, if a vendor has a complaint or accusation to make, he or she is required to put it in writing for the board. This rule discourages individuals from making petty accusations and signals to the board that conflict is potentially serious when they receive a written complaint.

In many other cases, the market manager is the sole person responsible for handling problems with vendors. If you are such a manager, consider taking a class in conflict resolution to help you deal with the personalities in your market. One manager who was also a school teacher said that the exposure he had dealing

## Farmers Market Management Skills

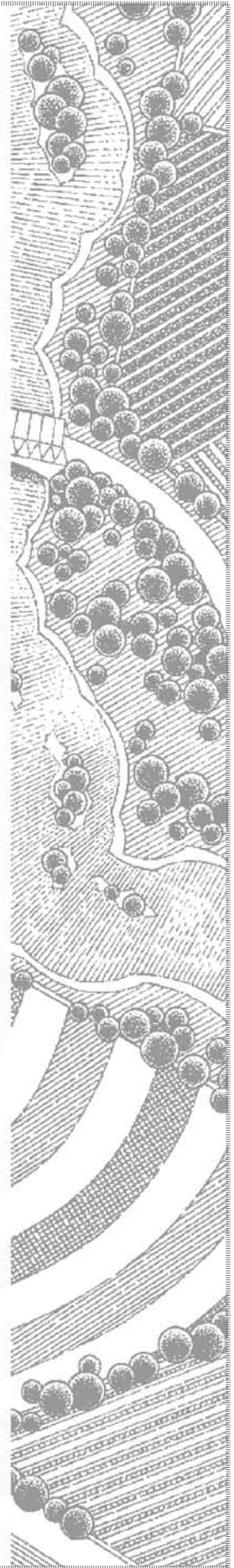
with angry parents was extremely valuable in helping him work with the diverse vendors at his market. Another manager said that a parent-effectiveness class she had taken helped her resolve conflicts. You can also talk to other farmers market managers about different ways they have found to deal with conflict in the market. As Alex Hitt of the Carrboro Farmers Market said, "It does not matter how good the bylaws are. There will be gray areas. You need someone who is good at working through the issues and then getting them down on paper. Take ideas to the board to work out and then write them into the bylaws or rules."

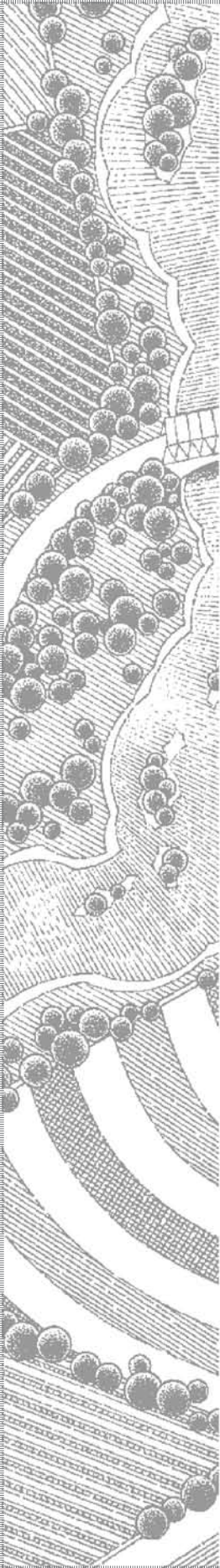
However the market is structured, the most important thing is to have the rules in writing and to show the rules to vendors before a problem arises. If you suspect that a vendor is selling someone else's produce, for example, talk to him or her about it and explain the market's policy. Show the vendor the written contract or agreement that he or she signed and take the appropriate action. For instance, some markets have a policy of simply warning the vendor the first time such activity is suspected. Give the vendor that warning in writing and keep a copy. Document the procedure so that you have a record if the problem persists. Daily market reports are a good place to keep track of this information or you may want to start a separate grievance log. If you suspect that the vendor is repeating the violation, follow the established policy, whether it is suspension from the market for a few months, a fine, or a farm visit. You also may want to talk to managers at other markets where the vendor sells to see if the problem has been occurring there as well, but consider the cost of extending this conflict outside the boundaries of your market by involving others.

Consistency in applying the rules is extremely important. If one vendor gets away with breaking the rules, you can create a domino effect and soon have many vendors who behave in a similar manner. Know what the rules are, when they are being broken, and how to address problems. If you have repeatedly spoken to one of your vendors about behavior in the market and the situation has not changed, ask one of your board members to talk to the vendor. Make sure you have the backing of your board on these issues as well so the board will support you and reinforce your efforts if a vendor will not listen to you.

### Exercise Your Judgment and Your Compassion

While consistency in applying the rules is crucial, the manner in which you exercise your authority and your sensitivity to vendors go just as far as impartiality in creating a positive tone for the market. One experienced market manager told of a new manager's experience. A vendor had missed a week without notifying the manager and the rule stated that the vendor would have to pay a penalty. The next week, the vendor sent an employee to work at the market. The new manager approached





the vendor's representative at the beginning of the day and informed him of the penalty. That employee began the market day dejected about starting off "in the red." The experienced manager's critique: "I would have waited until the next day and called the farmer himself and asked what happened. Maybe he had a flat tire on his way to the market, and he should have called, but things happen."

Know your goals and priorities and treat people both fairly and with respect.

### **Keep Conflict out of the Spotlight**

Whenever there is a conflict or potential conflict, take whatever steps you can to minimize outside involvement and customer awareness. The more people are involved, through hearsay or from sensitive conversations held within sight or hearing of bystanders, the more difficult it may be to resolve a conflict and the more repercussions the conflict may have. Furthermore, customers shop at farmers markets for the ambience and feeling of connection to a happier, simpler era as much as for the products. Their awareness of conflict detracts from that atmosphere. For many reasons, resolve conflicts as quickly and with as little outside awareness or involvement as possible.

### **Use Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Chapter Ten deals with conflict resolution in general, offering strategies that apply to conflicts with vendors as well as with others. In that chapter you will learn to recognize the stages of conflict. Information in that chapter will also help you to identify sources of conflict, understand the perspectives involved, and handle conflict so that the solution works for all parties involved.

### **Conclusion**

The manager and vendors are the heart of the farmers market. If the relationship between you and your vendors is marked by tension or continual conflict, it will be nearly impossible to run a successful market. Conflict resolution skills are an important part of handling inevitable difficulties, as conflict is an intrinsic part of relationships and does not need to be harmful. However, if conflict is frequent or acrimonious, it is important to examine the underlying causes and work to create a positive environment. Look to the chapters on the roles and responsibilities of the manager, on communication, and on problem solving for additional ideas.



## Managing Customer Relations

**A** key element of success for farmers markets is meeting the needs of the customers they serve and the communities in which they are located. Staying attuned to your customers' preferences and idiosyncrasies will help guide ongoing planning and promotion of the market. It will also result in a market that reflects the special characteristics of its locale.

**This chapter will enable you to:**

- ▶ **Recognize important elements of customer relations.**
- ▶ **Choose strategies to develop increasingly positive customer relations at your market.**

### Know Your Customers

During the planning phase of your farmers market, the organizers may have done some research to identify the demographics of the community. This information is useful for understanding the broad composition of your community, as well as for identifying potential customers, but it does not necessarily tell you who is actually shopping at your market and, depending on how long your market has been in existence, that demographic data may be so outdated as to be irrelevant.

It is important to keep track of your customer base so that you can successfully:

- Determine the product mix that will meet your customers' needs and preferences.
- Target advertising to be most effective.
- Plan events and promotions.
- Acquire and maintain sponsors.
- Reach out to those people who are not shopping at the market.

Since you are at the market most, if not all, days it is open, you probably already have a fairly good idea of who is patronizing it, as well as the range of common customer feedback, including their concerns and



## Farmers Market Management Skills

compliments. Just watching the crowd and talking to customers will provide you with information about your customer base. No doubt you sometimes hear more about the market from your customers than you would like. As Sandra Zak of the Soulard Market in St. Louis, Missouri, said, "People always know how to find me and they are not shy about telling me their opinions." On the other hand, many customers come and go from your market each day and never give any feedback. Do not assume that no news is good news. Subtle changes may accumulate until one day you realize that attendance is significantly lower than it once was.

### Customer Surveys

One way to keep track of your customers and their preferences is by conducting periodic surveys. These can be as complex or as simple as your budget, time, and energy allow. The primary objective of a customer survey is to uncover general trends as well as specific suggestions about the overall quality of the market. Surveys can also be useful for gathering information on what your customers think about:

- The quality, price, and selection of products at the market.
- Constraints on market attendance (limited parking, for example) and opportunities to grow the market.
- Any suggestions they have to make the market more enjoyable and user-friendly.

You can also use a survey to try out new ideas you have for the market. For instance, you may be considering changing the day or time of the market. If a large number of your customers indicate that they would not attend at that time, you may want to reconsider your plans.

### Other Ways to Gauge Customer Preferences

Another way to keep informed about your customers' satisfaction with the market is to post a suggestion box. Some markets display the completed suggestion cards



on a bulletin board with a response to the issue that was raised so customers know that their feedback is valued and their comments taken seriously.

Lying midway between the formality of a survey and the *laissez-faire* approach of a suggestion box are simple ideas like a question of the week. What do you want to learn about your customers' needs and preferences? Pick one question each week and ask, or have a volunteer ask, fifty customers. Some possible questions:

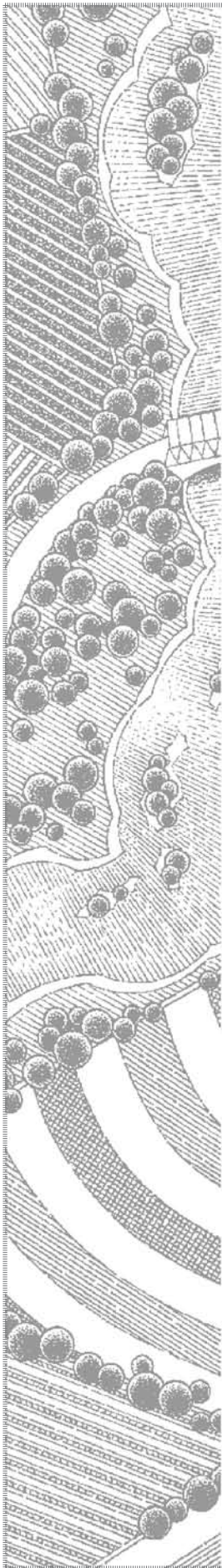
- What do you like best about the market?
- How would you rate the customer service provided by vendors? (excellent, very good, good, fair, poor)
- Is there anything you would like to buy at the farmers market that is not available?
- How often do you shop at the market?

By asking a single question of customers each week, you can obtain a great deal of data in manageable bits without overwhelming either you or your customers with a long survey encompassing everything you would like to know.

### Getting the Word Out

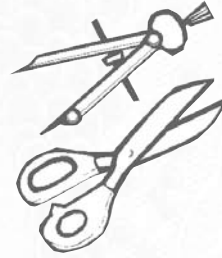
Once you know who your customers are, you need to let them know what is happening at the market. Information about promotions, events, specific crops, and other items available at the market all should be disseminated on a regular basis both to loyal customers and to the uninitiated. Furthermore, if you have a seasonal market, you have to work extra hard at the beginning of every season to regain customers who have been shopping at grocery stores during the months the market was closed. While you may gain more and more loyal customers over time who instinctively return to the market as soon as it opens in the spring or summer, there will be many others who will be more difficult to draw back. Volume Three, *Growing Your Farmers Market*, contains a chapter on promotion and publicity with guidance on drawing customers to your market and retaining those customers.

In general, markets rely on both free and paid advertising outlets. The best form of free advertising is word of mouth. If customers are happy with the market, they will tell friends and acquaintances. Other forms of free advertising include press releases, public service announcements on local radio and television stations, interviews in local media, and signs and posters that can be easily produced and reproduced. Paid advertising may come in the form of newsletters, printed posters, direct-mail flyers, and ads taken out in local papers or other media outlets. Your budget will dictate the amount you can spend, but most markets do some paid advertising.



## Farmers Market Management Skills

At the market, bulletin boards, signs, and posters are used to keep customers informed. Some markets distribute a monthly calendar or newsletter that tells customers about upcoming events, new items, seasonal produce, and even recipes for cooking with exotic (or standard) farmers market produce. Consider developing a mailing list so you can communicate with your customers with periodic flyers or reminder cards. For instance, you can use your mailing list to send your customers a notice telling them when the market will be open for the season and what the hours will be. Contests and raffles are a good way to get addresses for a mailing list.



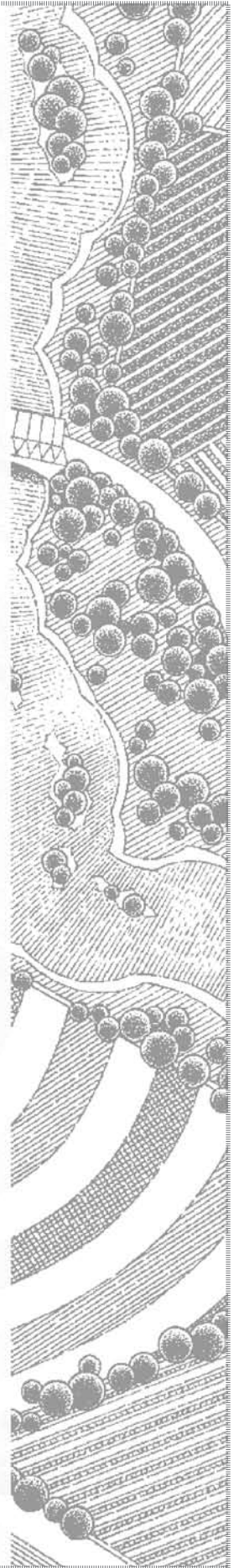
Finally, walk through the market and talk to your customers. Tell them about special promotions. Customers like the more personal attention they receive at the farmers market. Make sure everyone knows how to find you by wearing a pin, cap, or t-shirt that identifies you as the manager. Some managers enjoy wearing big funny hats, pig noses, or other silly (and easily spotted) accessories. You might also want to post a picture of yourself at the market manager's booth or table so someone who is looking for you knows what you look like.

### Giving the Right Messages

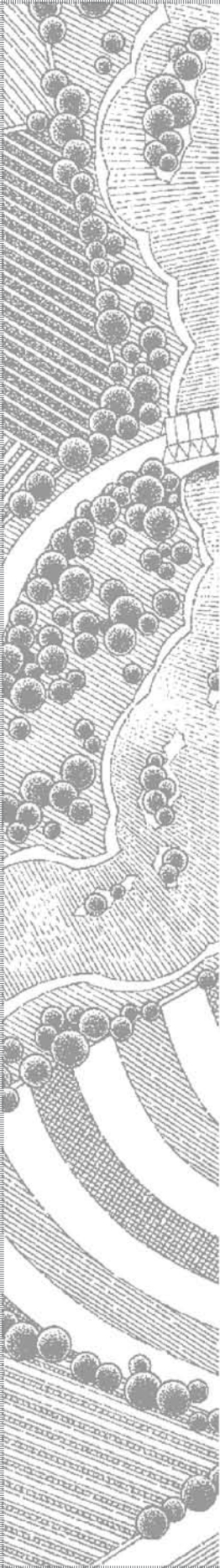
When you analyze who is shopping at your market, it is important to also think about who is not shopping there. Even if your market is well attended, do not become complacent about trying to attract new customers. Take some time to consider the messages that your market communicates. Is the market intentionally or unintentionally turning off certain groups? For example, do low-income consumers feel as welcome in the market as higher-income ones? Does the market reach out to local residents who may not speak English as a first language? Or conversely, are middle-income residents in the neighborhood staying away because they have negative perceptions about the market's low-income shoppers?

Furthermore, customer relations is not only your job; it is your vendors' job as well. It is your responsibility to make sure that vendors treat customers respectfully. While a vendor's sales may be the most effective gauge of his or her behavior, a rude vendor also can have a devastating effect on customers' perceptions of the market as a whole. According to Dan Kuebler of the Columbia Farmers Market in Missouri,

*What is an interesting thing when I look at our market here is that most of our growers come from outside the city limits. A lot of those people are not really part of the community during the week. They do not live here, but they become part of the community when they come into town and they can develop those*







*kinds of relationships with their customers. As far as customers are concerned, the growers are a part of the community at that point when they are meeting them and buying from them. A word of advice to growers—you have to keep in mind that when you come into a town or a city you become part of that community. You are no longer an outsider. So you have to treat people and develop relationships as if they are your friends and neighbors—because they really are.*

Work with your vendors to help them improve their customer service skills. Some areas to focus on include:

- Making eye contact.
- Being friendly and relaxed.
- Knowing the product and being willing to answer questions about it (e.g., how crops are produced, how long they are in season, what the different varieties are).
- Offering suggestions or recipe sheets on how to prepare products.
- Providing free samples for customers to taste.

## **Appreciating Your Customers**

One way to recognize and value your customers is by holding an annual Customer Appreciation Day. This event often occurs at the end of the market season and may be promoted as a harvest celebration. Design yours to incorporate and highlight the special crops, traditions, and activities that make your market unique.

## **Handling Complaints**

As in any retail environment, customers at your market will not always be satisfied with their shopping experiences no matter what you do to provide the best assortment of quality produce and to make the market as convenient as possible. While some complaints will be valid (e.g., a large quantity of moldy blueberries found at the bottom of a basket or an overcharge by a vendor), other situations may arise simply because the customer had a fight with her child and you or one of your vendors happened to be a convenient outlet for her anger. The majority of your customers will be satisfied with their visit to the market, but the few who complain can take a great deal of your time and energy and leave you with a headache at the end of the day.

## Farmers Market Management Skills

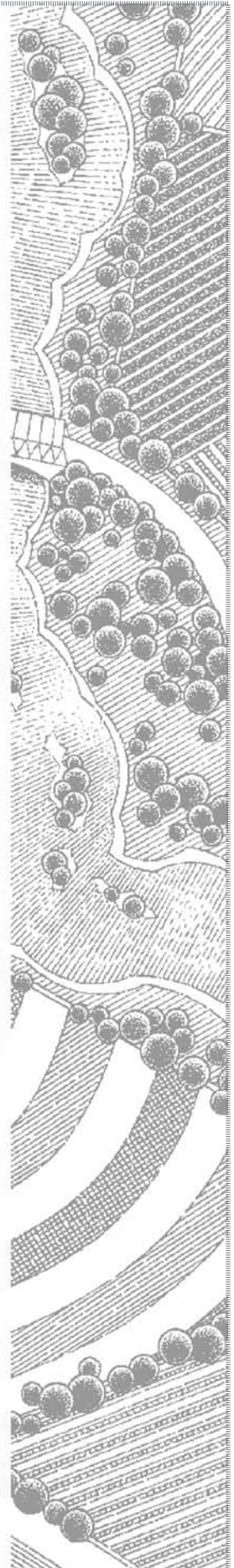
The following steps should help you deal with unhappy or difficult customers.

- First, make sure that you know the market's policies and procedures for handling complaints. Do you have a refund policy and are all the vendors aware of it? Is there a procedure for a customer to formally complain to the board if he or she has a grievance that cannot be easily resolved?
- Try to deal with problems on the spot to keep situations from escalating. Be open and willing to listen to someone who has a problem with the market. Ask open-ended questions (Who? What? Why?) and make sure the complainant knows that you are genuinely listening.
- Take immediate action on a situation if possible. For example, if a customer feels like she or he was overcharged by a vendor, talk to the vendor right away. Do not wait until after the market or tell the customer you will get the money back and send it.
- If the situation cannot be resolved immediately, plan a solution with the customer and follow through. If you need help, take the problem to your board and ask for their input and backing.
- If it becomes clear that a customer is irate about some situation that is out of your control or really has nothing to do with the market, try to remain calm and let the person have his or her say until things calm down. Yelling back at a customer or aggravating the situation further only escalates the conflict and can backfire down the road when they complain to their friends and create a negative opinion of you or the market. Remember, word of mouth travels fast. If you deal effectively and fairly with customer complaints, your reputation will reflect this.

In general, there are two types of complaints that you will hear at the market. One is conflict-oriented, such as an angry customer who was given the wrong change. The other type of complaint will be about the inherent qualities and constraints of direct-marketing. For instance, Kathy Shinneman of the Downtown Morris Farmers Market in Morris, Illinois, notes that:

*People have unrealistic expectations about what should be available and how much it should cost. They do not understand the natural growing process anymore, that mother nature has cycles. We have gotten very spoiled.*

These types of complaints are much harder to deal with because the education process required to change people's expectations, as well as their shopping hab-



its, is more difficult and happens more slowly. A major part of your job, however, is to sell your market and communicate with your customers about the benefits of shopping there. While this takes more time and energy, it is essential to retain skeptical customers once they have ventured into the market. If you respond to such comments defensively or make negative comments like “Well then go ahead and shop at Safeway,” you lose a golden opportunity to change the person’s attitude about local agriculture and seasonal eating. Taking the time to give an explanation in response to such comments could result in a life-long customer who will bring his or her friends along next time.

Shinneman deals with negative comparisons to local grocery stores by holding seasonal gardening workshops at the market in the spring and fall. These workshops educate customers about which crops grow during each season and encourage them to try gardening on their own so they begin to understand what it takes to produce the food found at the market. Many other creative solutions to

these types of problems exist—the important thing is to listen to your customers and find ways to address their concerns.

### Conclusion

Successfully managing the market’s relationship with customers means knowing what your customers want and providing it. Beyond meeting their need for fresh fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products, though, you also create and sell an atmosphere and you do that through publicity, promotion, special events, and the day-to-day dealings and communication that you and your vendors have with customers.





# Problem-Solving

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Be aware of the steps involved in problem-solving, especially those steps that are commonly skipped or glossed over.
- ▶ Be aware of the importance of an effective problem-solving process in the overall environment of the farmers market.

Whether you are solving problems on your own or as part of a group, there are steps that are common to the process. This chapter focuses on the process of solving problems in groups and these same steps apply equally to a manager's individual efforts.

## Why Use a Formal Process for Solving Problems?

Managers, farmers, and groups solve problems all the time, so why bother using a formal process with distinct steps to solve problems? Sometimes a group is lively and creative and moves from one problem to the next easily. Other times, groups get bogged down and cannot define a problem or offer a solution. Following are several problem-solving strategies to use with your group to avoid getting stuck and bogged down.

## Problem-Solving Steps

Problems are situations you want to change. Problem-solving means situation-changing, and the change that is appropriate depends entirely on the definition of the problem. If your definition of a problem only identifies symptoms and does not really get to the source, then your solution is not likely to work. An effective problem-solving process starts with attention to defining the problem. Consider all of the following problem-definition questions:

- Is there a problem?
- Where is the problem?
- When is this a problem?
- Is this really a problem?
- Whose problem is it?
- How does this problem affect the market, etc.
- Can the problem be dealt with by this group or are others ultimately responsible for solving this problem?



## Farmers Market Management Skills

Once the group has perceived a problem and decided that it is the appropriate body for solving it, create a statement defining the problem. It is sometimes effective to state the problem as a question. Avoid allowing the definition to include a solution. You might ask group members to state the problem in a “how to” format rather than a definition—“how to change or modify stall assignments to insure better access to the parking area” is a more valuable problem definition than “no one likes the stall assignments.”

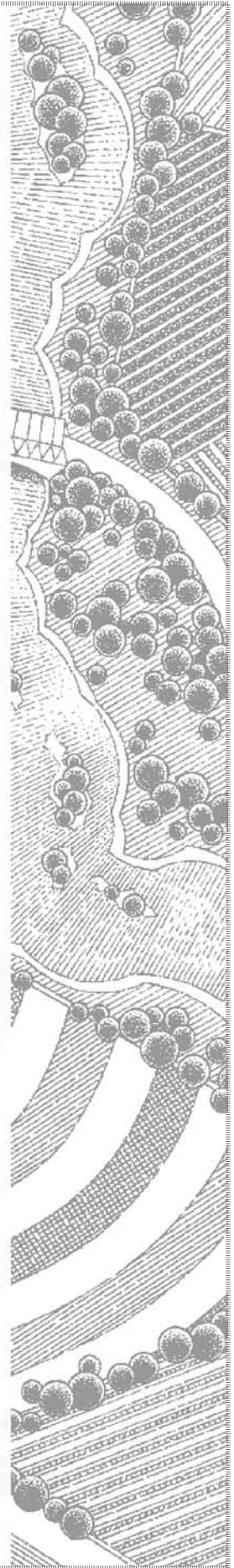
If defining the problem is difficult, try focusing on several key words and asking what is meant by those words in the context of the problem. Defining what is meant by “better access” in the preceding problem statement, for example, can help not only to define the problem but also to suggest changes.

**Additional input.** Some market problems may require additional information before the group can proceed. The parking access problem, for example, may require information from the city about increasing the market’s parking area. Be cautious about terminating a meeting because additional input is needed. Continue to work through the problem and seek input for change using “need additional information” as part of the process. For instance, “if the city allows us to use the twenty-five-foot right of way, then ...”

**Generating alternatives.** Thinking of solutions is the bridge between defining a problem and deciding on a solution. All potential solutions need to be valued. Your group may need to be reminded that “no idea is dumb.” This is a time for creativity, and every idea potentially has merit. Use the following list as a guide to generating alternatives.



- Begin generating alternatives by clearly stating the problem.
- Make sure all ideas are recorded.
- Set a time limit for generating alternatives.
- State an objective such as “let’s see if we can produce fifteen different ideas.”
- Remain neutral and insist that all participants remain neutral. This is not yet the time to evaluate ideas.
- Make sure the person responsible for recording has time to verify that everything is written down.
- Draw out people who have not contributed.



- Bring the discussion to clear, decisive end when the set time limit or number of ideas has been reached.

**Developing criteria for evaluation.** Generating criteria is a way to evaluate the alternatives without allowing personal opinions to determine the outcome. Possible alternatives to changing the farmers market layout include:

- Leave it as it is.
- Divide the sections, putting produce in one section and value-added sales in another.
- Rearrange the market according to plan A.
- Rearrange the market according to plan B.
- Buy new tables and signs.
- Change the stall criteria.

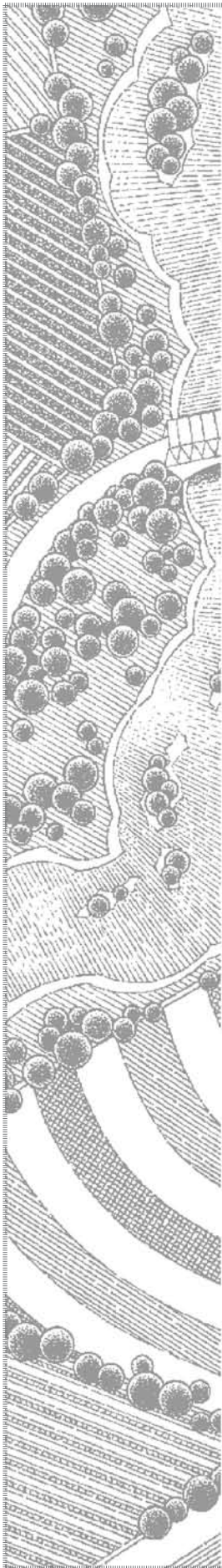


Then, putting the alternatives aside, work out criteria for assessing the alternatives. Sample criteria include:

- Must cost less than \$2,000.
- Increases ease of consumer access.
- Increases market visibility from the street.
- Reduce the visibility of produce trucks.

To help the group apply the established criteria, draw a grid that lists the alternatives on one side and the criteria across the top. Have the group work through the grid, assessing whether each alternative meets a specific criteria. As the grid is completed, one or two alternatives will begin to emerge as meeting more of the criteria than other choices. At that point, encourage a brief discussion of what participants like about each alternative in light of the criteria. As one or more of the alternatives becomes favored, ask the group whether there is anyone who cannot live with the favored alternative. If no one raises an objection, then consensus has been reached and the group has made a decision. If objections are raised, ask what changes can be made to make the alternative more acceptable.

Always keep in mind that it may be possible to merge two alternatives. It also is possible to implement two separate alternatives that do not conflict. Many times a group will be content to recommend two solutions and allowing an individual or another group to decide between them. This solution works well when your group seems to be unable to achieve consensus within a specified time frame. As a last



resort, have the group vote. You may want to remind the group that the vote may result in a less cohesive group. It also may be necessary to remind members who continue to maintain extreme positions that the group may end up losing more time by voting than if they tried to modify an existing alternative.

### Planning Implementation

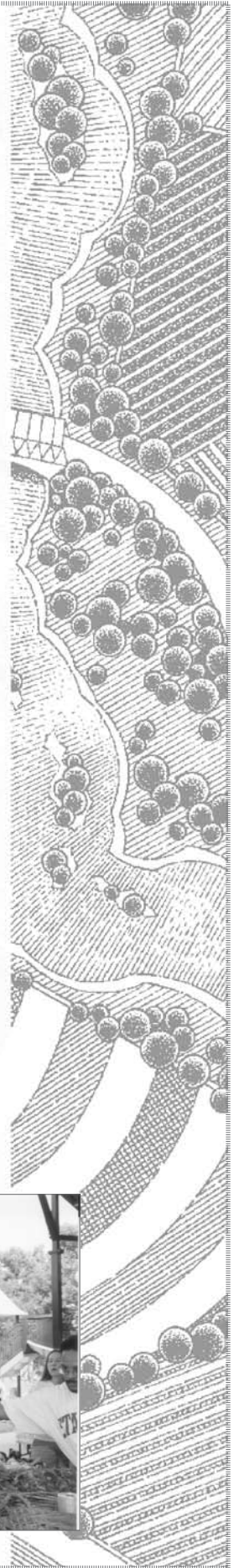
At the center of most implementation planning is some type of flow chart, diagram, or prioritized list. Some activities must precede others. Have the group generate a list of all the activities that need to be performed to implement the decision. After the list is generated, shuffle the activities around until everything is listed in a logical order. Always ask what has to be accomplished before this activity can begin. Use the same techniques and time limits previously discussed to keep your group moving through this process.

### Ask Basic Questions

When the group decides on something that has to be done before the next meeting, make sure that the basic questions of who, what, when, and where are answered. "Who will volunteer to get the new city parking ordinances? Okay, Jim says he will do it. When will you have this done? By next Monday? When can the rest of us get this information? Okay, you will email and fax it to everyone by Monday night." Record the who, what, when, and where for each item on your chart, diagram, or list. Hold off on long-range items that require the results from shorter-term ones. Add the who, what, when, and where as you reach these items.

### Monitor Implementation

Problem-solving only results in change if and when the decision is successfully implemented. Many groups try to leave the responsibility for implementing a decision to someone else. This rarely works. The responsibility for implementation should rest with the group that made the decision. The manager, a member or the chairperson of the board of directors, or a member of the group that made the decision should also monitor implementation,





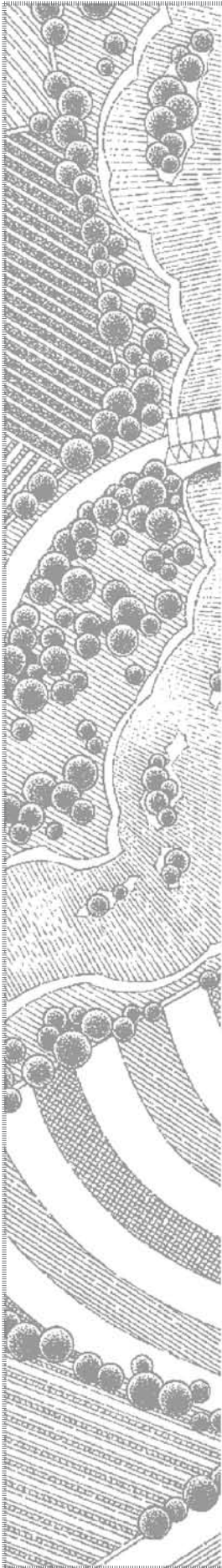
following up to see that individuals who took on responsibilities are on track in accomplishing their tasks.

### **Evaluate the Solution**

Once a solution has been implemented, the group should evaluate its success. Did the actions taken really solve the problem? How well? How do you know? You can use the criteria you generated while choosing a solution to evaluate the effectiveness of that solution. If everyone is satisfied and there are no unforeseen and unacceptable consequences, then you have successfully solved the problem. If there are elements of the solution that did not work as planned, you may need to take further action.

### **Conclusion**

Whether solving problems individually or in groups, the process involves the basic steps of defining the problem, generating solutions, making a decision, implementing the decision, and evaluating its success. Many groups skip the follow through and evaluation, allowing a problem to become perennial. This saps the energy of the organization as people begin to feel that meetings are all talk and a waste of time. Effective problem-solving, with attention to follow through and evaluation, contributes to the strength and success of a farmers market.





# 10

## Conflict Resolution

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Evaluate your market's policies and procedures for dealing with conflict.
- ▶ Recognize elements and stages of conflict.
- ▶ Be aware of strategies to handle and resolve conflicts.

Managers can build a positive environment through open communication, skillful management, ethical behavior, and fair and respectful treatment of vendors, customers, staff, board members, and others who are involved in the market. Still, conflicts will arise. One of the most frequently cited challenges for market managers is how to handle the myriad personalities and interests that coexist at a market. Success in dealing with conflict depends on the skills and techniques used to manage it when it arises.

### Evaluating Your Organization

You may not realize the importance of having an organization-wide policy for resolving conflicts until you face a major problem. The following questions will help you assess your organization's ability to deal with conflict. If there is recurring or constant tension within your market organization, these questions can help you identify some of the root problems that are causing or fostering tensions. If applicable, raise these questions with your board to make sure that the lines of communication stay open for everyone involved in the market.

- Do we have a dispute-resolution system or process? What is it? Is everyone aware of it and do they use it? If not, why not?
- Does our system or process seek to resolve conflict as its primary goal or does it seek to assign blame and/or punish one party?
- Is our system confidential?
- Is it committed to timely and fair resolution?
- Do we encourage communication when differences arise?
- Does our system foster trust and facilitate growth in relationships?
- Does it take into account inherent power imbalances between managers and vendors? How does it address those imbalances?



### Identifying Conflict

Conflict can come from a wide variety of sources, ranging from a bad night's sleep to a long-held resentment about a perceived injustice committed by another person. Conflict can be caused by a breakdown in communication, and miscommunication almost always aggravates situations where conflict already exists. Power imbalances between managers and employees and managers and vendors are also a significant source of stress on working relationships and on the health and functioning of the market. The manager is responsible for enforcing the rules and regulations of the market and yet vendors often pay the manager's salary. If managers are volunteers (often they are also vendors), they may resent the amount of work they do for the market if other vendors are perceived as contributing little to the market's functioning and administration.

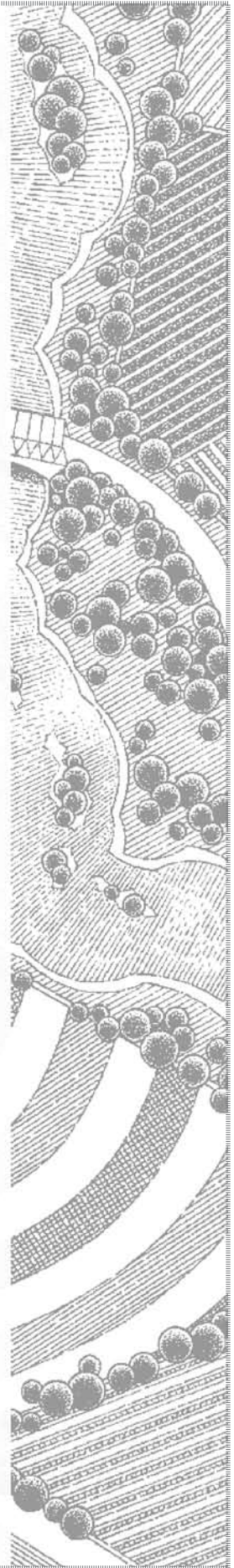
It is important to keep the lines of communication as open as possible so grievances are less likely to build up. When they do, however, there are steps managers can take to address problems and negotiate compromises and solutions. Not every problem can be solved. Keep in mind, as well, that conflict resolution is a skill that requires time to develop. If your first attempts at resolving conflict do not go as smoothly as you would like, take heart. You will get more practice and eventually build the skills necessary to more effectively manage contentious situations.

Finally, while conflict situations can be exhausting and time-consuming, they do not always have to be a bad experience. Handled appropriately, they can be an opportunity to stimulate creativity, revise outdated procedures, and encourage the growth of the organization and the individuals involved in it. If you can learn to view situations of conflict as opportunities for constructive change and problem-solving, you can turn some challenges into opportunities.

### Stages of Conflict

Part of successfully managing conflict is developing some perspective and choosing strategies for dealing with the conflict based on your analysis of the situation. In the midst of a conflict, especially when your own emotions are engaged, it is easy to lose perspective, so it may be helpful to recognize that conflicts generally progress through five stages:

- **Latent Stage:** Participants are not yet aware of the conflict but hidden frustrations may surface at any time.
- **Perceived Stage:** Members are aware that a conflict exists.
- **Felt Stage:** Members feel stress, anxiety, and possibly hostility.



- **Manifest Stage:** The conflict is open and can be observed.
- **Aftermath Stage:** The outcome of the conflict, which can vary from resolution to group dissolution or perhaps a return to the latent stage, is determined.

If you can recognize the phases of a dispute, you will be better able to anticipate and prepare for the actions and reactions of those involved. You also may be better equipped to influence the aftermath stage to achieve a favorable outcome.

### Understanding the Conflict

Before you attempt to resolve a conflict, it is important to understand the nature of the issue. Bring all of the affected parties together to discuss the issue at hand. If you are involved in the conflict and are trying to facilitate communication, check your ego at the door. You need to be able to control your emotions and try to see the conflict from the other person's perspective. It may be useful to use an outside facilitator if the relationship has broken down to the point that the individuals cannot communicate directly with each other. If so, find someone who is perceived as unbiased and can effectively hear both sides of the story.

Pay attention to the environment in which the discussion is taking place. Make sure that the atmosphere does not unknowingly give an advantage to one side or intimidate someone. For example, the market manager's office may be a very comfortable place for the manager to discuss his or her emotions and feelings, but it can alienate a vendor by the distance it creates through the hierarchical environment. Choose a place that is more neutral and acceptable to all individuals involved. Sometimes just being in a different environment helps people think differently about a situation and can lead to more creative solutions to problems.

Seek to establish ground rules for the meeting so that each person can contribute to the conversation. Participants should be told not to criticize each other and to speak only in "I" terms. ("I feel like this happened" rather than "You did this to me.") Setting these basic rules from the outset and adhering to them will likely lead to a more productive meeting that is less likely to dissolve into chaos or attack.

With everyone at the table, ask the following questions to uncover information that will aid in resolving the problem:

- **Is the conflict real?** It may be that what seems like a conflict is actually a miscommunication or misunderstanding.



- **What is the conflict?** Try to get at the root of the problem instead of focusing on secondary issues that may be clouding the picture. Identifying the actual point of conflict will help to avoid future occurrences and may help remedy the situation.
- **What is the cause of the conflict?** It is also important to accurately identify the source of the conflict. If you erroneously attribute the cause of the problem to the wrong source, the problem can easily return after you think it has been resolved.



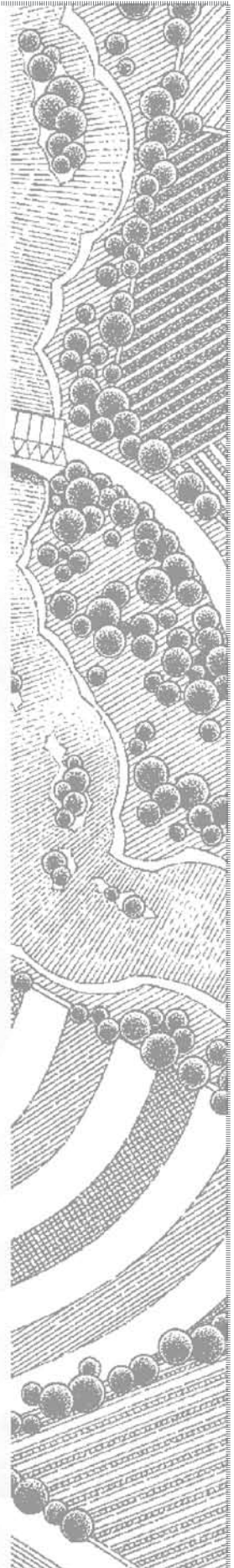
### Understanding Each Person's Perspective

To make progress in resolving the conflict, both sides need to understand where the other is coming from. Stephen Covey, author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, encourages setting the following ground rule that must be met before negotiations can begin. "The ground rule of communication is very simple—you cannot make your point until you restate the other person's point to his or her satisfaction."

Often, individuals are so emotionally invested in their own perspectives that they cannot see another person's side of things. Many conflict resolution experts recommend having both parties paraphrase the other's grievances as a way to get people to calm down and make an effort to see more sides of the issue. Once people truly understand why a person is upset, they can begin to think about negotiating and compromising. Furthermore, when people see that others are making an honest effort to understand where they are coming from, they become less defensive and more willing to work toward a solution that will satisfy everyone.

### Generating Solutions

Once the problem has been identified and the perspectives of those involved have been recognized and considered, it is time to begin negotiating a resolution. In negotiation, individuals often begin the process "knowing" that they have the right solution to the problem if only the other side would realize it. Flexibility is important in these situations, so participants' willingness to consider alternative solutions will contribute to a positive resolution. It is helpful to enter into negotiations with several specific options and be prepared to hear what others have to offer.



Three major obstacles that often impede the generation of alternative options are:

- Premature judgment.
- Fixation on a single answer.
- Assumption of a fixed situation.

These obstacles hinder the creativity needed for effective negotiation and can lead to an “either I win or I lose” view of problem-solving, making it impossible for both sides to find suitable resolution. Rather than attempting to “beat” the other side, individuals must be encouraged and willing to work toward a win-win solution if possible.

With all parties at the table, brainstorm options for resolving the conflict. Make sure, however, that the issue has been clearly defined and that the objectives are clear. If a situation has more than one objective, brainstorm each one individually. Remember, it is important to establish a “no criticism” rule so that all participants feel free to provide input without fear of judgement or ridicule.

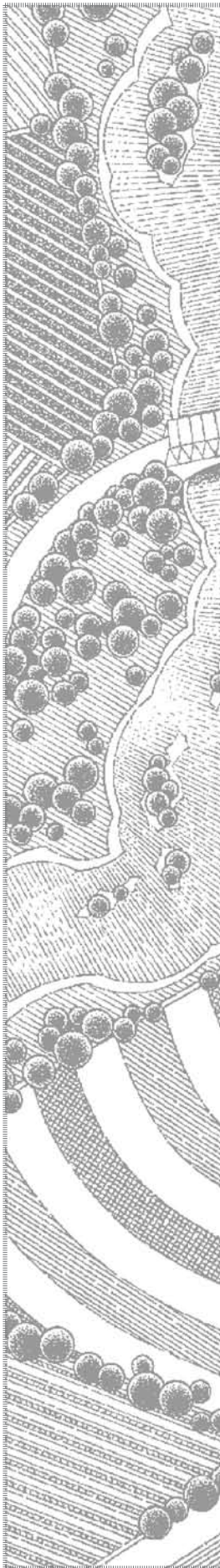
When all reasonable solutions have been suggested, the next step is to prioritize the solutions in relation to their degrees of acceptability. While one party may feel that an option is very acceptable, another party may not approve at all. Understanding the next best option becomes critical to this process, as it may be somewhat acceptable to both sides. During the process, try to find areas where both sides can benefit. This will create a situation in which the parties are not striving for one side to “win” over the other but to reach a wise, fair agreement.



**A note about time.** Going through this process can be time-consuming and emotionally and mentally draining. Keep an eye on the situation and set a time limit if it seems that the conversation is getting repetitive or dragging. It may be that the group needs to take a “time out” for awhile to get away and think about the situation or that resolving the conflict will require several discussions over a period of days or weeks. Some issues can be resolved more easily and more quickly than others. Use your judgement to ensure that the discussion does not become a marathon that leaves everyone feeling exhausted.

### Acceptance

Whatever solution is reached, make sure that everyone is in agreement. Ask each person if they accept the terms of the compromise and give them a chance to voice any remaining concerns. Do not let someone sit silently with arms crossed and assume that they are okay with the discussions. Down the road, these people



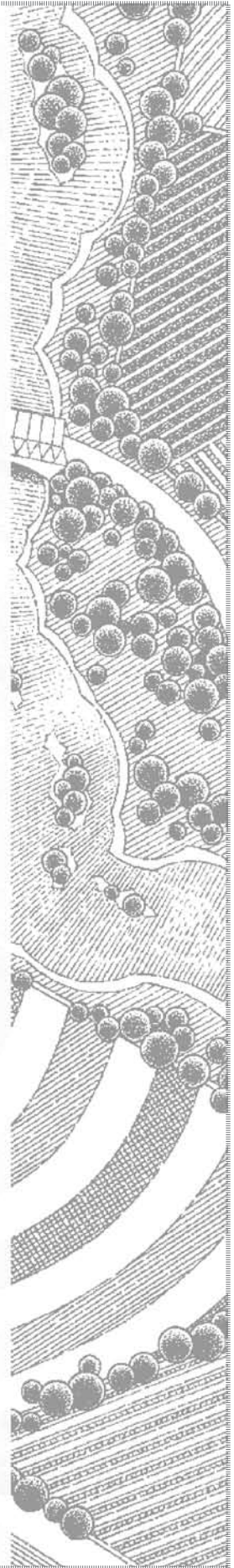
may have a bigger problem and feel unempowered. Before considering the conflict resolved, decide how the solution will be evaluated and, if necessary, revisited.

### Checking In and Following Through

A few days later, do not forget to check in with all parties involved in the conflict to make sure that the resolution has been successful and that individuals are not still harboring some resentment. Follow through on evaluating the solution on which the group agreed and make whatever revisions are necessary.

### Conclusion

Conflict resolution is always easier in an atmosphere of trust among people who respect each other's points of view and expertise. Conversely, if there is an atmosphere of disrespect or distrust, then conflict resolution is very time-consuming and probably not very successful. This chapter offered ideas and strategies for resolving inevitable conflicts, but their application will be successful only if there is a solid foundation for the organization of the market.





## Communicating with a Large Audience

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Improve your ability to tailor your writing and to speak to the purpose, audience, and medium.
- ▶ Organize your ideas.
- ▶ Be aware of common mistakes.
- ▶ Identify resources for improving your writing and public speaking.

For many people, writing and public speaking are two of the most difficult means of communication. The challenge arises in part from a lack of practice. You may communicate mostly through informal conversation, but there will be times when you need to employ public speaking or written communication, whether as a presentation to the chamber of commerce, a regular newsletter, or a request to the city council for a zoning variance to build a roof over your vendors' stalls.

This chapter addresses both writing and public speaking because the two share some important characteristics—both are primarily one-way communications in which you deliver a message to a group rather than interacting interpersonally and require knowledge of your audience and the intended message, organization and planning, and attention to detail and accuracy. Your success can enhance or undermine your credibility, and both writing and public speaking are learned skills.

If you follow some guidelines and practice with some regularity, you can develop your writing and public-speaking skills.

### Writing Effectively

#### Plan before You Write

Before you begin to write, think about the purpose, audience, and medium of communication involved. Electronic communication has become so common that many people use the informal style of instant messaging or "chat" as their writing style even when the purpose, audience, and medium call for more formal writing. While quick messages to friends or even to colleagues allow for abbreviations, incomplete and run-on sentences, and emoticons (those little symbols like ;-)) that pop up in emails), memoranda, newsletters, and formal letters and notices require a more formal style and attention to correct grammar, punctuation, and usage.

Another common problem is overly formal writing. Make your sentences as short as possible while conveying your meaning. Add descriptive words only when they

are needed to make your meaning clear. Have someone read your documents to be sure you have conveyed the intended message.

### The Writing Process

Before you begin writing, it is important think about the overall message and intended audience. Consider the following ideas before you start writing.



**Determine the basic purpose of the message.** It is difficult to write clearly if you do not know the purpose of the communication. Are you trying to direct, inform, or persuade someone? More specifically, who are you trying to persuade, and to do what?

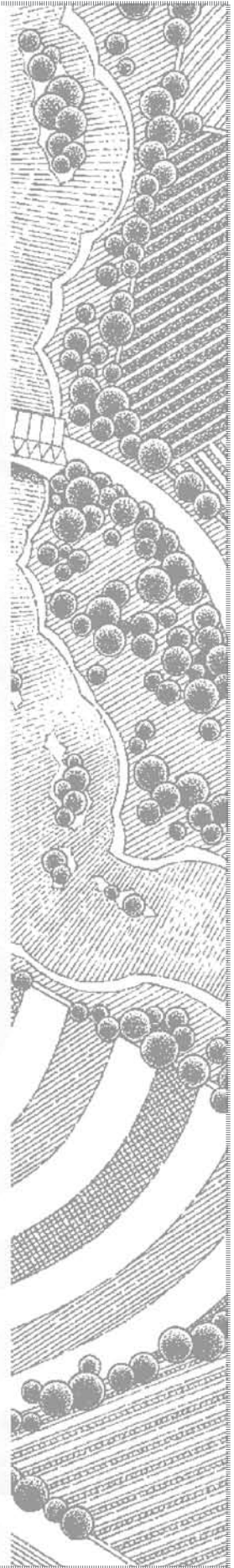
**Consider the audience.** Your tone and content will likely change based on who the intended audience is. A letter to the mayor will be different from a letter to a community group. Think about the style of your writing before you begin.

**Collect and evaluate the information you need before beginning to write.** Many people begin writing before they have enough information. This can lead to frustration and writer's block. Do the research first and then your writing.

**Organize and divide your material into principal topics.** Outlines are invaluable tools in the writing process. Writing will come much easier if you know what you want to say before you start.

**Write your first draft.** Give yourself a break during your first attempt at writing a document. Remember, it does not have to be perfect in the beginning. Write out as much as you can and then put it aside for awhile. If you have time, a day or two is generally a good amount of time in which to get fresh perspective on what you have already produced. You may find that the document "writes itself" in your head while you are sleeping once you have a basic outline down on paper. Good writing takes time. Chances are that you will see things differently if you separate yourself from it for awhile.

**Write a second draft (and a third and a fourth, if necessary).** Refine your writing until it says what you want. It is often useful to have a colleague or friend read your draft and give you feedback. If they do not know the subject, even better. You will know you have been clear if they understand the message even though they do not know the specifics. Also, always proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes. A typographical error can invalidate even the most effective message and make the reader question the abilities of the writer.



## Watch Out For . . . Common Mistakes in Writing

Some mistakes are so common that most people are barely aware of them, but for others, they are so glaring that they undermine the credibility of the writer. Rather than publish an exhaustive list, we have included a few common errors and listed two helpful resources to help you avoid errors and improve your writing.

### Frequent Errors

- Using an apostrophe where none is needed
  - First plum's of the season!  
(no apostrophe needed to make a plural)
  - Get your's today!  
(no apostrophe with a possessive pronoun)
- Mixing up homonyms; that is, words that sound the same

For example:

- |                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ there, their, and they're | ■ too, to, and two    |
| ■ here and hear             | ■ where and wear      |
| ■ it's and its              | ■ you're and your     |
| ■ affect and effect         | ■ counsel and council |
| ■ compliment and complement | ■ capitol and capital |
- Mixing up "that" and "which"
  - Alot (The correct spelling is "a lot")
  - "The reason is because" (should be "The reason is that")

### Resources

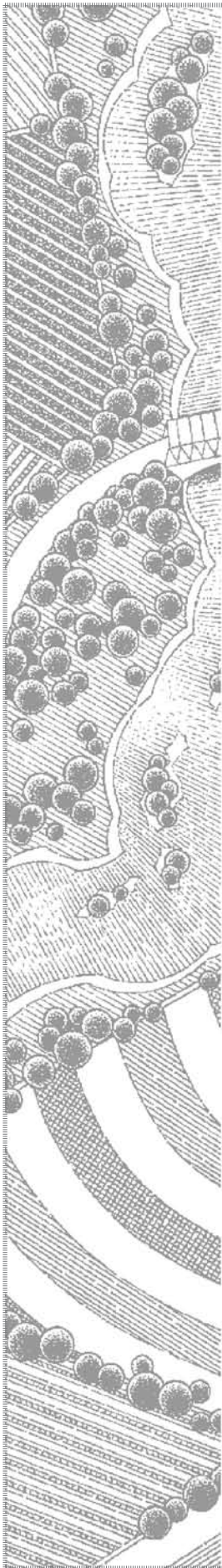
There are a number of internet sites to help you avoid common mistakes and improve your writing. We have included two that have been in existence for several years and that have proven reliable and accurate.

#### Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

#### Capital Community College Guide to Grammar and Writing

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar>



### Making Presentations and Speeches

A recent survey found that Americans are more afraid of public speaking than snakes, heights, or death itself. Nevertheless, it is a skill that many people must develop to effectively carry out their jobs. Whether you are expected to make a presentation on a loudspeaker during the market or state your case to the local board of supervisors, public speaking skills will enable you to confidently represent your organization.



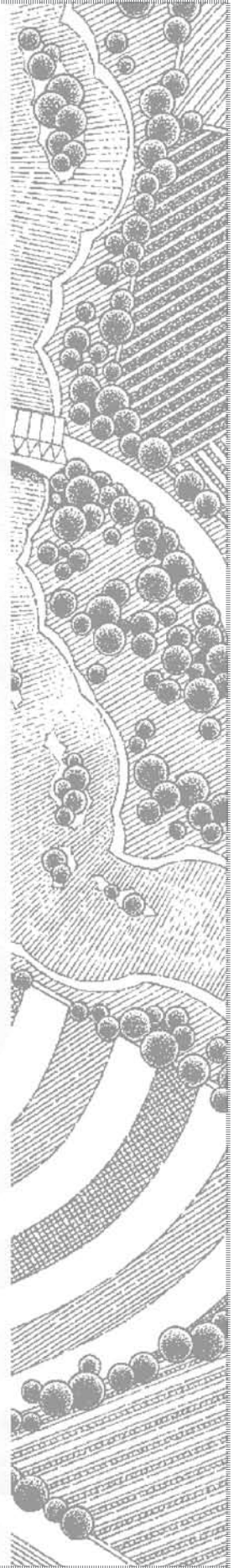
The best way to improve your speaking ability is to practice. If public speaking is difficult for you, find a way to practice in a safe environment. A community college or continuing education course or participation in an organization like Toastmasters offer both expert guidance and opportunities to practice. Another way to learn public-speaking skills is to observe experienced speakers. How do they present information? What language do they use? How do they hold their bodies? Watch their techniques to see what works for you and what fails to hold your attention.

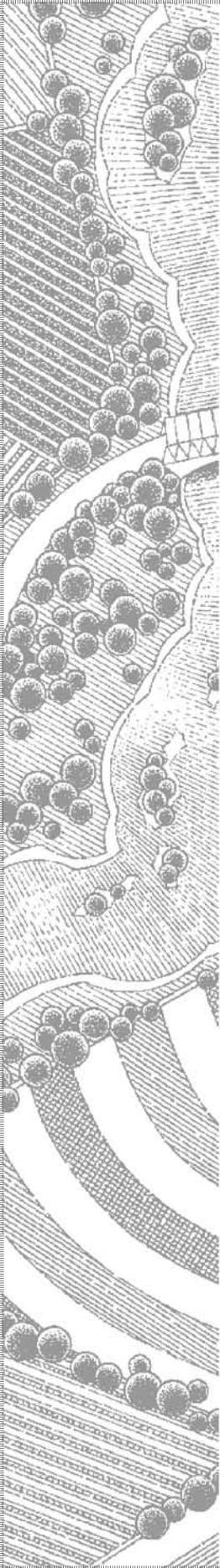
### Preparing a Presentation

A good presentation will appear effortless to the audience, but it may have taken weeks to develop. Depending on the formality and content of your presentation, you may need to begin thinking about what you are going to say and the manner in which you will present the information well in advance of your actual talk. Obviously, if you are going to announce the winner of a raffle at the market on Saturday, you do not need to practice for weeks ahead of time. But if you are presenting a new proposal for an expansion of the existing market to the local officials, you may want to develop both an oral presentation and accompanying slide show.

The best way to ensure that you do a good job with a presentation is to create an outline, fill in necessary details and examples, and practice it several times. Stand in front of a mirror or ask a trusted friend to listen. You should be able to go through the entire speech without stopping to change wording or reorganize your thoughts. While it may feel embarrassing and take several tries to get it right, you will be glad you did when you can comfortably express yourself in front of a group.

Before you begin to write your talk, think about who the audience will be. Is it the mayor and city staff or a nonprofit organization? The intended audience will determine the language you use, the formality of your speech, and the way you present yourself. It also is important to consider whether the audience will be





friendly or skeptical. If you expect to encounter opposition, you need a plan to address it; for example, you can anticipate and address their arguments against your ideas.

Other things to consider are the length of time for your presentation and the type of room or environment in which you will speak. Your talk will be organized differently if you have three minutes to talk on the sidewalk near a busy intersection or one hour in a board room with an overhead projector. Make sure you know as many of these details as possible ahead of time.

### Organizing Your Presentation

Once you know the specifics about the talk you will give, organize the actual material you are going to present. No matter how good your ideas are, they can be lost if your presentation is not well organized. In general, a speech is organized into the following components:

**Introduction** – Introduce your subject and why you are talking about it. Also, give an overview of what you will be covering. If you use an accompanying slide presentation, this is akin to a table of contents. For instance: “I will be speaking today about our plan to expand the Main Street Farmers Market. I will present our new blueprints, business plan, and financial projections.” Your audience wants to know what to expect. Providing this road map at the beginning of your talk will clue them in to where you are going and prepare them to receive the information. Make sure that your presentation actually follows your outline; use this introduction as a way to check on the contents of the presentation as you prepare it and to stay on track.

**Main Points** – To make your presentation clear for the audience, organize your material into several main points. Many presentations are organized around a specific number of primary ideas or suggestions, such as “ten tips for successful marketing” or “five ideas to help you overcome your fear of public speaking.” This type of list presentation is useful for creating a framework for your talk. You can also arrange speeches by issues or subject areas, such as business skills, marketing skills, and community relations. Each of these subjects would be given separate attention within your speech. This format allows you to cover more complex subject areas.

**Conclusion** – It is very important to have a good, solid conclusion to your speech that wraps up and briefly reviews the points you just made. You may want to start this part of your speech with something like “in conclusion” or “finally” so that your audience knows the talk is about to end. It also gives your audience a chance to hear the main points again and to remember them.

**A note about your audience:** keep in mind when you prepare your speech that the attention of your audience will be its strongest during the first and last couple of minutes of your talk. The rest of the time, people to whom you are speaking will fluctuate between attentive listening and day dreaming. It is therefore desirable to make the beginning and end of your speech strong enough and complete enough to allow them to take away the basics of your message during those few minutes.

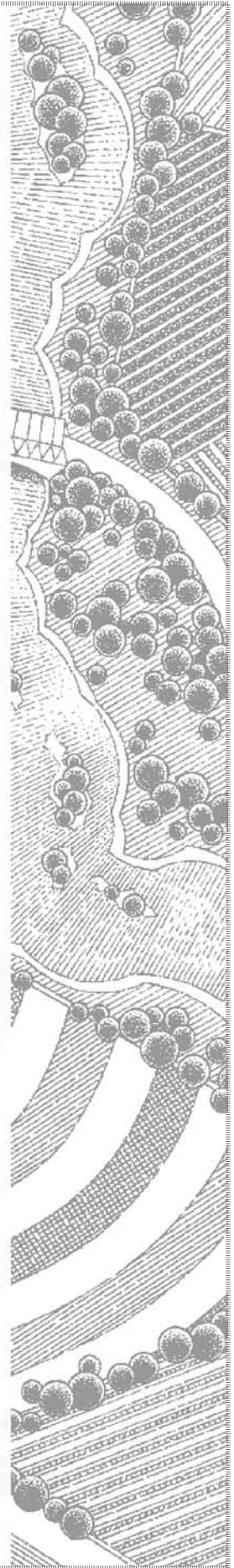
### Keeping Your Audience's Attention and Getting Your Message Across

The quickest way to lose someone's attention is to read or speak in a monotone. On the other hand, if you speak in a relaxed conversational tone, others are more likely to take interest. The tone of your voice and the type of language that you choose will have a big impact on the willingness of your audience to listen. Here are some tips for creating an interesting and engaging presentation:

- ▣ **Use simple language.** Do not use jargon unless the situation specifically calls for it and you are certain that your audience will understand it. Avoid acronyms (e.g., GMO for genetically modified organisms) for the same reason.
- ▣ **Develop your topic.** Instead of simply reading a bulleted list of items, give a few examples to illustrate your point. Nothing drives information home faster than a real-life story about what you are saying.
- ▣ **Be specific.** Avoid generalizations that can be misinterpreted. In addition to using examples, clarify your points.
- ▣ **Know your topic.** If you seem unsure of the material you are presenting, other people will question your authority. Do your research and be ready to back up your points.
- ▣ **Use humor occasionally.** This does not mean throwing in off-color jokes. Instead, highlight something that is funny or ironic in a way that helps relax and engage your audience.

How you present yourself is as important as the material you present. From the moment you stand up in front of others to speak, you are developing a rapport with your audience.

- ▣ **Make eye contact.** If you look people in the eye, they will be more likely to focus their attention on you. If you are looking at someone while you speak, then they feel like you are talking directly to them. Do not, however, focus on just one or two people. Your eyes should move around the room; try to look at almost everyone at some point during the talk.



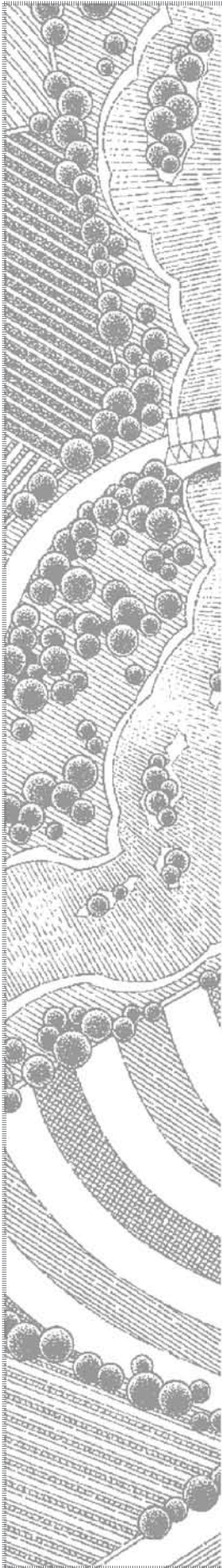
- **Use an engaged tone of voice.** Use your voice to highlight important points, express humor, and transition between sections of your talk. If you are not interested in what you are saying, others will not be either.
- **Relax . . . or try to.** If you present yourself in a nervous fashion, say “um” often, or drop your papers on the floor, your body language will distract from the message you are delivering. Even if you are shaking inside, practice developing a relaxed stance while speaking in front of others.

### Visual Aids

Visual aids such as slides, flip charts, photos, and handouts can graphically convey information more meaningfully than words alone. If you choose to use these tools, make sure that the material they contain is organized, clear, and important. Fuzzy slides or sloppy overheads will only distract your audience. Also, test any equipment you want to use before the talk begins. How many presentations have you seen where the slide projector broke down and fifteen minutes was wasted trying to get it fixed? This type of mistake will turn many of your listeners off and cut down on the time you have to present your ideas.

### Conclusion

In this chapter you have learned about the importance of good writing and public speaking and presentation skills. Developing these skills is a worthwhile investment of time, energy, and money because they can pay off in the image you project and the credibility you earn. Even more important, though, in terms of sheer volume and amount of time, is interpersonal communication. The next chapter will address listening, nonverbal, and speaking skills to improve your communications with all those involved in the market.







## Interpersonal Communication

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Be aware of the importance of listening, nonverbal cues, and speaking in interpersonal communication.
- ▶ Gauge your own skills and areas that need improvement.
- ▶ Know strategies and techniques for more effective listening, nonverbal communication, and speaking.

Interpersonal communication is the interaction between two or more people. While written communication and public speaking are mostly about one-way communication, interpersonal communication involves receiving as well as delivering a message. This type of communication includes listening and nonverbal communication as well as speaking. As a farmers market manager, you probably spend more time using communication skills—with vendors, board members, customers, community members—than any other kind of skill.

### Effective Listening Skills

Listening can be described as the ability to understand and respond effectively to oral communication. People generally spend more hours listening each day than writing, reading, and speaking combined. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are always hearing things. But we are not listening unless we concentrate and try to understand what we are hearing; unlike hearing, listening is an active process. We have to evaluate what we hear and make some effort to get the message that is being imparted.

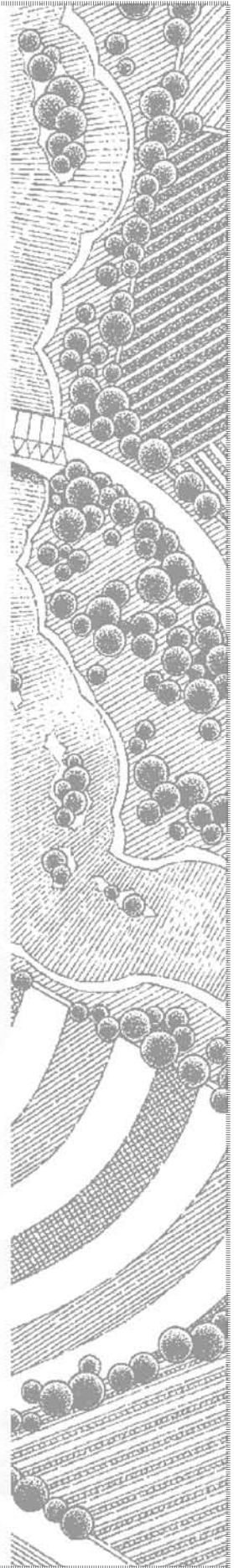
The ability to listen effectively is a crucial communication skill. We spend about 45 percent of our working hours listening. Furthermore, unless you have trained yourself to be a stronger listener, you likely only listen at about 25 percent efficiency. It is possible to improve your listening skills with practice. Here are some suggestions that can increase your capacity to listen.

- **Realize that listening is work.** It takes concentration to listen. You have to be able to put aside the other things on your mind and on your desk to understand what the person is saying.
- **Prepare to listen.** The first step to take in the listening process is to stop talking. Many people forget this. You cannot hear anything if you keep talk-



ing. If you have more to say, wait until the other person finishes his or her statement before you start talking again.

- **Keep an open mind.** It is important to keep preconceptions out of the way while you are listening. If you think you already know everything the other person is going to say or you do not like them because they have, for instance, different political views than you, you will not be open to the message they are trying to convey.
- **Do not let your emotions get in the way.** Often when someone says something controversial or emotionally laden, we stop listening because we begin to feel emotional. It is important, however, to concentrate and try to neutralize the emotional trigger before it blocks the message from being received.
- **Empathize; do not direct.** When people bring ideas or problems to you, they want to know that you understand their perspectives. An empathetic response, such as a knowing smile or an encouraging nod, fosters more open communication. Do not, however, insert so much of yourself into the situation that you unintentionally shut down the speaker. Coming to you with a problem does not necessarily mean wanting the problem fixed; it may be that the person simply wants to be heard and understood. If someone wants your opinion, be prepared to give it honestly. You need to judge the degree to which the person wants to know what you think. It is better to communicate that you have clearly understood what was said than to try to change the person's opinion.
- **Try not to get distracted.** Sometimes in the process of hearing someone else's ideas, we get sidetracked and start brainstorming in our heads about a particularly interesting aspect of the topic. Try to avoid going off on a mental tangent or composing your response until the speaker has finished talking. You can always leave the meeting or conversation and write your ideas down later. You will miss much of what is being said if you do not stay focused on the person speaking to you.
- **Maintain a listening posture.** The physical position of your body is important while you are listening. If you let your eyes wander or you slouch in your chair while someone is speaking to you, this can be interpreted as lack of interest and the person is likely to tell you less. Do not shut down your speaker by gazing out the window. Maintain eye contact and sit up. The importance of body language is covered in more detail later in this chapter.



## Nonverbal Communication

Body language, eye contact, expressions, and gestures: nonverbal cues are very important in communication. While it may seem that words are the most effective way to get a point across, it is actually the way we hold our bodies and the facial expressions that we use that determine how our messages are received by others. Say an acquaintance tells you that she really enjoys her job but does not look you in the eye while saying it and keeps her arms crossed in a defensive manner. Would you believe the words? Or would you wonder if what she said was not exactly in line with how she felt?

When you communicate with someone in front of you, the message delivery and receipt occur on two levels simultaneously—verbally and nonverbally. If the messages sent on these two levels are incongruous, the nonverbal message will likely override or at least give different meaning to the spoken message. For this reason, it is important to be aware of body language you use when communicating with others. Awareness of these signs will help you understand the people with whom you communicate as well. Following are some aspects of nonverbal communication to consider.

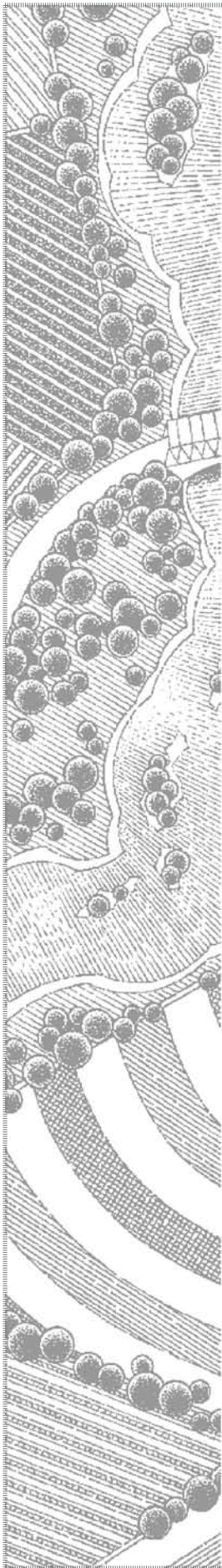
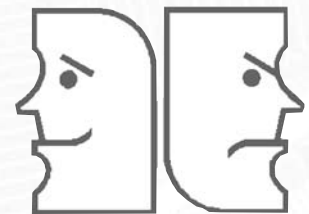
### Physical Orientation

These types of nonverbal cues include:

- The distance you keep between yourself and someone else.
- The way your body is oriented in relation to someone else (face to face or side to side).
- Your physical posture (slouching or standing tall; arms crossed or relaxed by your side).
- The amount of physical contact you use (patting someone on the back or shaking hands).

### Facial and Physical Gestures

- Facial expressions such as smiling or grimacing and a lack of expression all convey messages to your audience. Expressions can change frequently during a conversation and are constantly, often unconsciously interpreted by those around you.



## Farmers Market Management Skills

- Eye contact is a telling form of nonverbal communication. If you do not look someone in the eye, that person may sense that you are trying to hide something. If you purposely avoid eye contact, this signals a lack of interest in talking to someone or an attempt to end a tedious conversation. Constant and direct eye contact, however, is perceived as a sign of aggression; in U.S. culture, listeners and speakers tend to look near rather than directly into each other's eyes.
- Physical gestures include moving your hands, waving your arms, and clenching your fists. These types of cues can be very hard to control because often we are not aware of how frequently we do them.

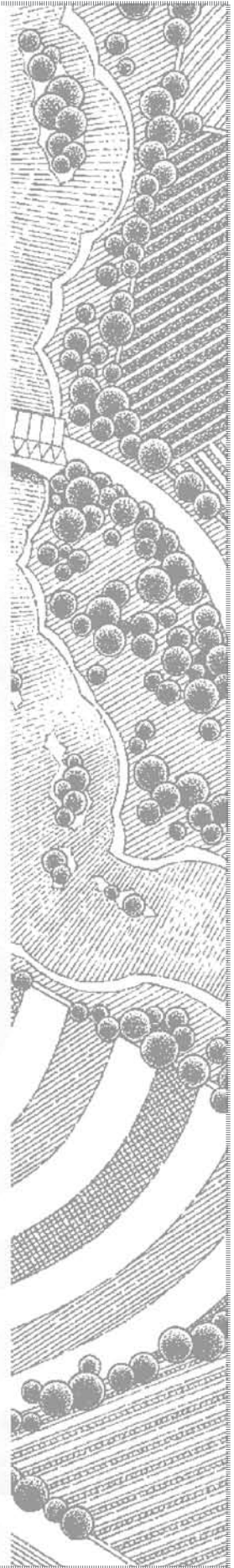
One important thing to remember about nonverbal communication is that every person has a unique way of using the body to communicate. So, a furrowed brow can mean anger or disapproval for one person but concentration and thoughtful consideration for another. Exercise discretion in reading other people's body signals. Over time, however, you will come to understand the body language of people with whom you frequently interact. It can be a very useful tool in deciphering meaning.

### Speaking Your Mind

Although it is given less attention than other aspects of communication, interpersonal speech is probably more important than public speaking or even writing; after all, we spend much more time talking with people than writing to them or making presentations. And the way we speak to each other can cause misunderstandings and problems. Many people want to please others and so tend to be less direct and less clear than necessary. Others want their words and directions to be understood and, in their desire to be clear, can be abrasive. Here are some considerations and strategies for speaking clearly and effectively:



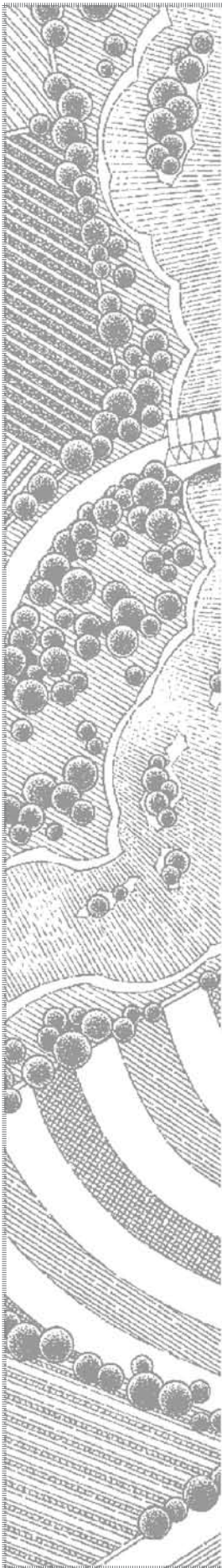
- **Volume.** Speaking too loudly can signal falseness or aggressiveness while speaking too softly can be seen as passive-aggressive because it forces others to hang on your every word while also being very difficult to challenge. Speaking too softly can also signal a lack of confidence.
- **Tone.** Even while your words are respectful, your tone can send another message—one of impatience, sarcasm, or anger. A neutral or positive tone is usually preferable. Even if you are angry and imparting negative information, a neutral, factual tone can defuse or improve the interaction.



- **Interruptions and clarifications.** You may be so engaged in a topic or conversation that you jump in to finish someone else's sentences and begin speaking. Try to minimize that tendency. When seeking further information, try phrases like "could you tell me what you mean by that?" rather than "I do not know what you mean" or "I do not know what you are talking about."
- **Wording.** If you are giving direction and you have the authority to do so, be clear. For example, "I need you to do this by 4:00 on Thursday" is more specific than "it would be great if this got done this week."

## Conclusion

Strong communication skills are vital to effective management. If you cannot communicate with the people around you, you will be less able to do your job. This includes listening carefully to others, speaking clearly to an audience, writing effectively to get your message across on paper, and understanding nonverbal communication. Improving these skills takes practice and effort but can result in more open dialogue and trust between you and your vendors, your board members, and other people involved in the market.





# 13

## Time Management

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Record and evaluate how you spend your time.
- ▶ Be aware of time management strategies.
- ▶ Reorganize some of your activities to consistently accomplish the highest-priority tasks.
- ▶ Begin to consider tasks to delegate to others.

Even the most organized managers can find themselves spending most of their time scrambling from task to task, putting out fires, always feeling they are falling behind. Feeling that way on a regular basis over a long period of time can lead to burnout as well as being made a manager less than effective. Most managers can benefit from examining how they spend their time and reorganizing some of their time according to their priorities for the market.

### Time Analysis

Suppose you were asked how you spend your work time each day. Could you provide an answer without having to think about it? Could you realistically estimate how much time you spend in meetings or making phone calls? What about on event promotion and advertising? How much time is committed to paperwork?

One management motto worth considering is “Plan your work and work your plan.” Most managers do some of this intuitively, but many also find themselves wondering why they never get around to certain tasks. Do you have goals for the market? Have you listed all your responsibilities? Do you know which ones are the highest priority and what will happen if those items are not accomplished? Do you have a strategy for accomplishing the most important tasks? And if so, do you actually practice it? A work plan can be a valuable aid in managing your time.

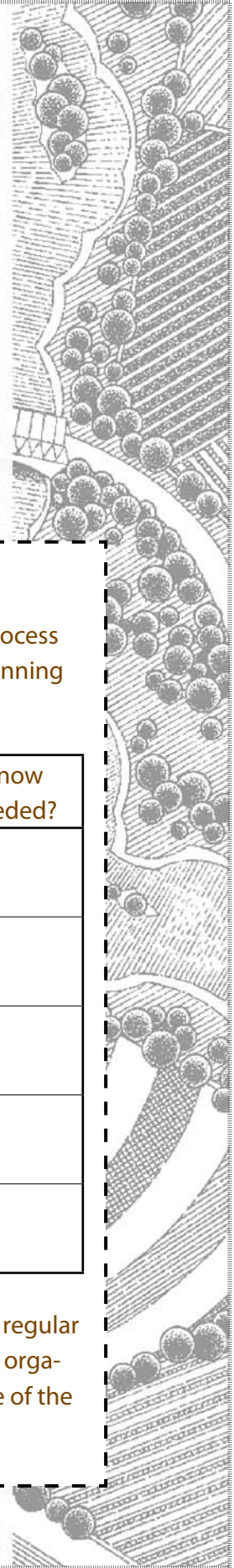
Consider analyzing how you spend your time at work. It may take a while, but the end result can be a considerable reduction in the time spent on minutiae and more time available for work that will produce the biggest results for your market.

**Step One:** List all of the routine activities you perform. A few typical categories are paperwork, planning, telephone calls, and meetings. List your responsibilities in order of importance and highlight those that need a great deal of time. For example, some extremely important activities, such as keeping in



touch with your board of directors, may take a small amount of the overall time you spend at work. Leave a space next to each activity so you can record the time you spend on each one daily. Do this for several weeks.

**Step Two:** After two or three weeks or two or three markets (whichever is longer), total the time figures and generate some percentages based on the average time you spent on each aspect of market management work every day. You may be surprised at the results. Were the most important jobs given the time they require? Were there any particular chores that consistently required a large portion of your day? Were small tasks really as fast and efficient as you thought they were?



### An Organizational Plan – Review Your Organizational Goals

Volume Three of this series, *Growing Your Farmers Market*, takes you through the process of creating a strategic marketing plan for your market. Here, we show the basic planning document you can use to manage your time.

Goal/Activities	Person/People Responsible	Timeline/Milestones	How Will You Know You Have Succeeded?

Refer to this organizational plan to help you prioritize your time. Which tasks need regular attention? How much time do they require? Compare your time analysis with your organizational goals and use any discrepancies to reorganize your work time. Use some of the time management strategies that follow to help you stay on track.



## Time Management Strategies

One way to make sure that you really are moving forward with the larger goals you have set for yourself is to break them into specific tasks using the organizational plan shown here. If you have a big goal, break it into several smaller tasks until it seems manageable. Allocate time for you to accomplish those tasks within your daily routine. Analyzing your time in this way will ensure not only that you are working more productively and efficiently but that you also are continually working toward the overall goals and objectives that have been identified in the planning process.

### Planning a Time Budget

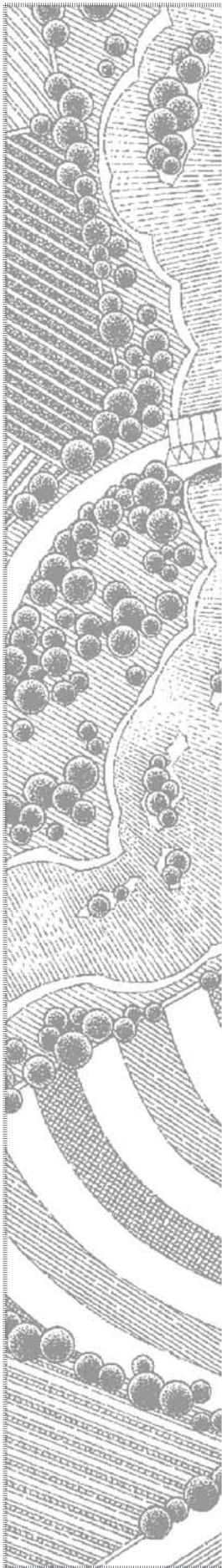
After evaluating how you spend your time on the job, the next step is preparing a time budget. However, whether your week is ten, twenty or forty hours long, do not feel that you have to budget every single minute. Attempting at that could be more dangerous than what you are presently doing—you could become compulsive and lose the spontaneity and flexibility that is needed to run a farmers market.

Most time management consultants agree that you should try to budget about 90 percent of your time. If you can plan ahead for eighteen hours of a twenty-hour week, for instance, then you are doing great. You will need the remaining hours to take care of unexpected calls and last minute situations as they arise.

Once you have planned your week, you will have a better idea regarding what you have to do each day and how you will accomplish it. During the week, take ten or fifteen minutes at the end of the day to go over your plan for the next day and make sure that you have not forgotten anything and that what you have scheduled is reasonable. Those few minutes of planning can save you hours in wasted time the next day and throughout the week. Once you get in the habit of planning your time this way, you should find that you become more efficient and productive.

### Organizing Tasks

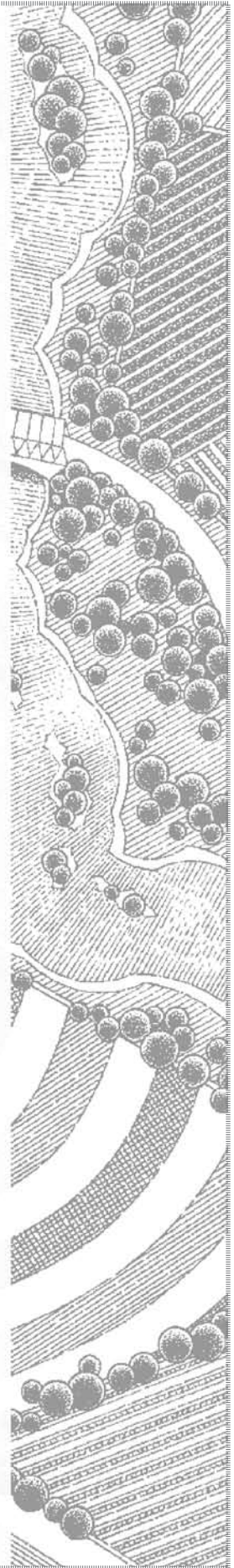
One source on time management advises managers that it is best to gather up similar jobs and take care of them together. The time it takes to switch gears from one task to another adds up when it is done multiple times a day. A manager of a large, urban farmers market says that every morning he figures out who he needs to call and then tries to reach as many people in one sitting as possible. He finds that this makes his office hours feel more focused and relaxed since it reduces interruptions from answering and making phone calls in the middle of other chores. Allocate time for sending and responding to emails in a similar manner.



## Prioritizing Activities

While you may have some understanding of the relative importance of various tasks, it can help to take the time to formally prioritize them. Some tasks may be very important to the long-range vision of the organization but are not the most urgent. Other tasks may feel urgent but are really not that important to the big picture. Steven Covey, author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, draws a distinction between urgent and important activities and how people can learn to prioritize their work lives to make the best use of their time. The Time Management Matrix shown here divides daily activities into four quadrants that are ranked as being some combination of Important, Not Important, Urgent, and Not Urgent. Covey argues that many people spend 90 percent of their time in the first quadrant doing things that seem urgent but actually are not very important to the long-range goals of the organization. To be an effective manager and effectively take control of how you manage your time, you should spend more time on activities in the second quadrant. Instead of reacting to crises and problems all the time, quadrant-II people think proactively and preventively. "They feed opportunities and starve problems." Quadrant-II activities also are ones that require the most brain power, and, since they are not the most pressing, are ones that are most often set aside.

The Time Management Matrix		
	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<p><b>I</b></p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven projects.</p>	<p><b>II</b></p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Prevention, relationship-building, planning.</p>
Not Important	<p><b>III</b></p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Interruptions, some phone calls and mail, some reports and meetings, proximate pressing matters, popular activities.</p>	<p><b>IV</b></p> <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Trivia, busy work, some mail and phone calls, time wasters, pleasant activities.</p>



## Keep Interruptions to a Minimum

It has been estimated that managers are interrupted an average of six times per hour. Each time you are interrupted, you lose focus and it takes time to regain that focus when you go back to your task.

One way to avoid unnecessary interruptions is to take the time in the beginning of a project to plan and delegate tasks so that everyone involved understands their roles and responsibilities. This will save you from “putting out fires” in the long run. If you have a group project, bring together all those involved to plan a course of action so you do not have to answer everyone’s individual questions later. Periodic meetings with your vendors is another way to address many people’s questions at once.

Communicating clearly with people is another way to avoid unnecessary and time-consuming questions. Post a bulletin board at the market and get vendors in the habit of checking it for weekly updates. Some markets use newsletters or memos to inform vendors and customers about what is happening at the market.



## Make Appointments with Yourself

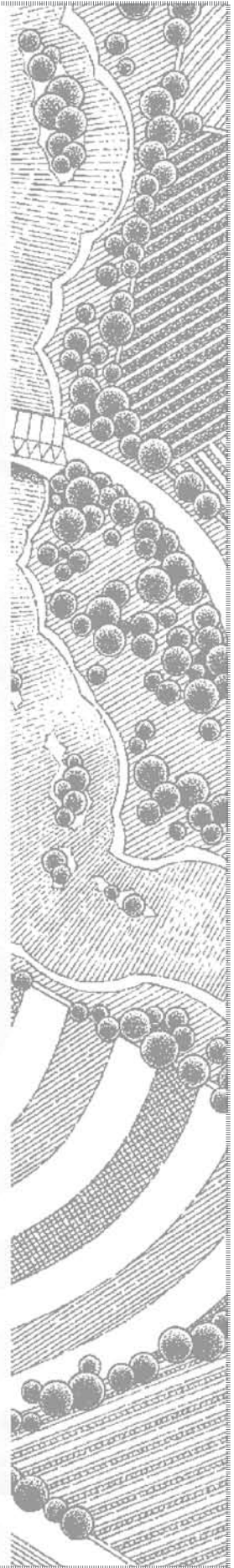
Finally, when you have a big project that needs your undivided attention, set an appointment with yourself to work on it and treat that appointment as seriously as one you would make with a colleague. Close your office door or go to a quiet place—whatever it takes to get the time alone that you need to accomplish the task. You will be much more productive if you can work for a period of time without interruption.

## Delegate

According to time management consultants, people underestimate the time they spend on tasks that others could easily do or are already doing. For example, are you tallying up numbers that your vendors are also figuring out for their own records? Scheduling a time for communication would be more efficient than both of you doing the same job—maybe you can rotate the chore instead. Or, in other instances, a job may be more effectively handled by somebody else. The next chapter discusses the process of delegation.

### Conclusion

While prioritizing and using time management strategies can help you to use the time you have to greatest effect, you may simply be trying to do more than you have time for. If that is the case, delegating some of your work can help, as can better communication and involvement on the part of your board of directors and vendors and community support. All the management strategies in this volume work together to make your time more manageable and your efforts more successful.



## Delegation Techniques

This chapter will enable you to:

- ▶ Consider the advantages of delegating some tasks and responsibilities.
- ▶ Understand the kinds of tasks to delegate and how to do so.
- ▶ Know and use delegation techniques that contribute to a positive market environment.
- ▶ Use delegation of tasks to build the capacity of the market and its staff and volunteers.

No matter how well you are able to “plan your work and work your plan,” you may find that there still is too much to do. That is the time to bring in your most valuable resource—the employees, the board, coworkers, volunteers, farmers, and friends who have committed to helping you run the market. One of the key components of developing yourself as a manager while simultaneously relieving yourself of the time crunch is to learn how to delegate.

Delegating does not mean passing off work and burdening others. Done correctly, it helps coworkers and volunteers build their skills and abilities while allowing you to work on the projects that really need your unique and valuable expertise. Effective management involves combining and coordinating everyone’s efforts and that means delegating tasks wisely.

### Why Delegate?

We know that when it comes to physical labor we cannot do everything. While our physical capabilities are finite, our brains’ abilities are virtually unlimited. Dick Lohr, author of the audio seminar *How to Delegate Work and Ensure It’s Done Right* (Career Track Publications, Boulder, Colorado), says, “When you try to

do everything yourself, you are working from the neck down. You are physically limited in what you can accomplish. If you want to free up your own future and free up the future of your people and help them grow, you’ve got to delegate, which is working from the neck up.” As a quick example, think about how long it takes you to clean up after the market. Is there a way you can organize and delegate different parts of the job so that each vendor or volunteer can help with a small task and make the overall breakdown go faster? This is changing a physical job into a mental one. By organizing physical work differently and involving more people in small, manageable tasks, you can accomplish more in less time.

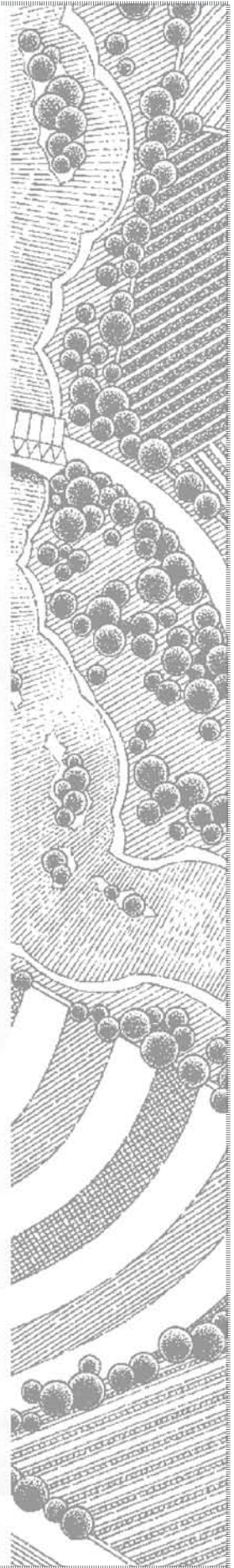
Another way that delegation builds the capacity of the market is by making strategic use of the talents and strengths of the people around you. For example, as the manager, you could spend time learning the necessary software and computer

## Farmers Market Management Skills

skills to set up a computerized system for the market's records or to produce advertisements or you could delegate those tasks to people who already have some or all of the necessary skills. If you do it yourself, you are taking valuable time from another task; if you delegate to someone else, giving them the resources and information they need to do the job, then you can use your time and your assistant's time efficiently.

Despite the advantages, many managers are reluctant to delegate responsibility. Reasons for this include the following:

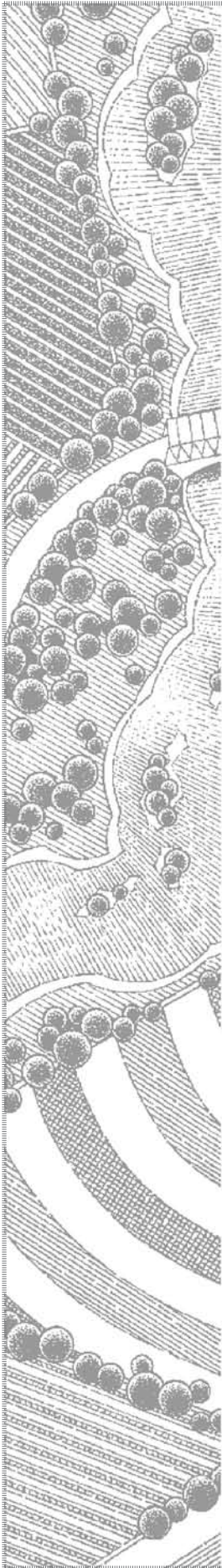
- Many managers want to do the things that are quick, rewarding, interesting—in other words, the fun jobs. However, these may be the best assignments to delegate. If you continue to cover all of these types of jobs, you may find yourself out of time before completing more important tasks that cannot be done by anyone else.
- Managers worry that they will lose control and authority. Effective delegation, however, can actually increase both. By bringing in more people, you can accomplish more and you can supervise and exercise authority over the results.
- Managers sometimes think that their staff members do not have a sense of the big picture and so will not make decisions that factor in all the different consequences. While it is true that an assistant likely has less overall knowledge than a manager, the only way for an assistant to gain that knowledge is through exposure and experience. Judicious delegation involves providing the necessary information to get the job done and supervising so that errors can be corrected during the process of carrying out the task.
- Managers often think that their way of doing something is the best way and therefore see it as the only way. If this is a trait you recognize in yourself, consider the cost in tasks that are not undertaken or completed because you simply do not have time for everything. Such tasks might better be completed, even if they are done in a different way. Figure out what needs to get done and who can do it. If there are tasks that can be done in several different ways, give your assistant the resources and tips needed to get started but give enough autonomy to allow him or her to decide how best to work as long as the work is done within the established time line and gets the desired results. Make yourself available if for questions and guidance.



## How to Delegate

Learning to delegate takes time and practice. Start with jobs that do not crucially affect the market's budget and will not make or break an event. Then, as your assistants gain skills and experience, and as you gain comfort in supervising them, more and more assignments can be delegated. It takes work to be a good delegator, but it is well worth the effort in time you save, in the level of involvement you share with your community, and in the popularity of the market. The following nine steps will help you become a great delegator:

- Make sure you are clear about the objectives of the project and the results you want.
- Clearly communicate the job, giving expectations and due dates. Ask your assistant for ideas. He or she may have good input and asking the question and hearing ideas also ensures that the task is understood.
- Offer advice but do not tell your assistant exactly how to do the work—give some room for creativity. Train your assistant, if necessary, and fill him or her in on the needed facts and anticipated complications.
- Remember to build confidence and enthusiasm, so pick jobs that are suited to the individual's interests and abilities. Explain why he or she was chosen and why the project is being done. Discuss how it fits into the bigger picture as putting assignments in a context makes them more meaningful.
- For large, important projects, establish a budget, timeline, and process for reporting progress.
- Get a commitment and make sure your assistant has the time and interest to follow through.
- Be available to offer guidance, feedback, and other necessary support.
- Take time to evaluate the finished product for the benefit of you and your assistant. Recognize the lessons that both of you learned.
- Find someone who is a good delegator and use that person as a role model. Practice, observation, and feedback are keys to mastering delegation. You may approach the person you have chosen as a role model and ask her or him to mentor you in gaining that skill. Mentoring can be a simple, time-limited arrangement involving a phone call when you are having difficulty—for example, when you are unsure how to supervise someone whose work needs improvement. Experienced managers are often willing to share their knowledge and appreciate being asked as long as mentoring is not so demanding that it interferes with their own work.



### Encouraging Participation

Like many managers, you may feel that there is no one to whom you can delegate tasks. This is a problem for small and large markets alike. During the height of the market season, vendors are often too busy with their own farms to help with many of the market's needs. When the whole community seems strapped for time, it is difficult for a manager to ask for help. You need the support of your community and vendors, but it takes time to build. Following are a few steps you can take to encourage volunteer participation.

#### List the Markets "Assets"

At the beginning of each market season, ask your volunteers, board members, and vendors to give you a list of their "assets." What are their strengths? What previous jobs have they had that give them skills in helpful areas? What do they like to do? Then when crunch time comes around, you will have some idea of people's strengths, interests, and experience and who may be willing to help.



#### Make Tasks Quick and Clear

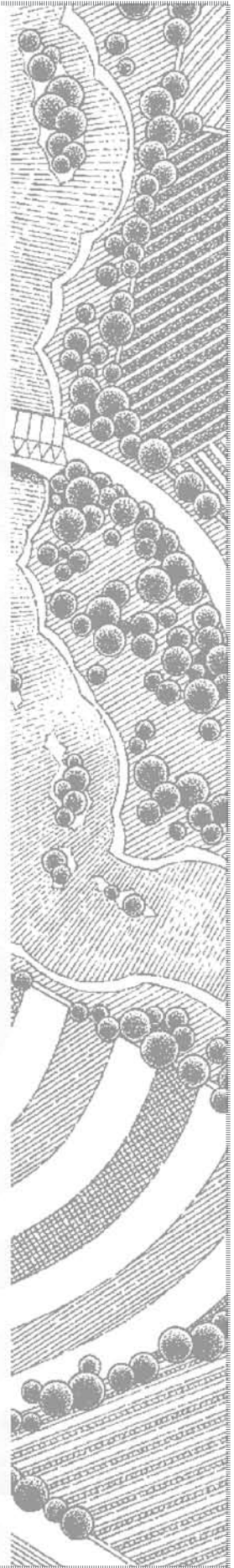
When you ask busy people to help you, make sure the tasks you develop are clear-cut and short-term. Even if the overall project from your perspective is long and in-depth, breaking it up into smaller segments allows each person to handle it bit by bit. This makes it much less intimidating and easier for people to agree to the task.

#### Make Tasks Consistently Short

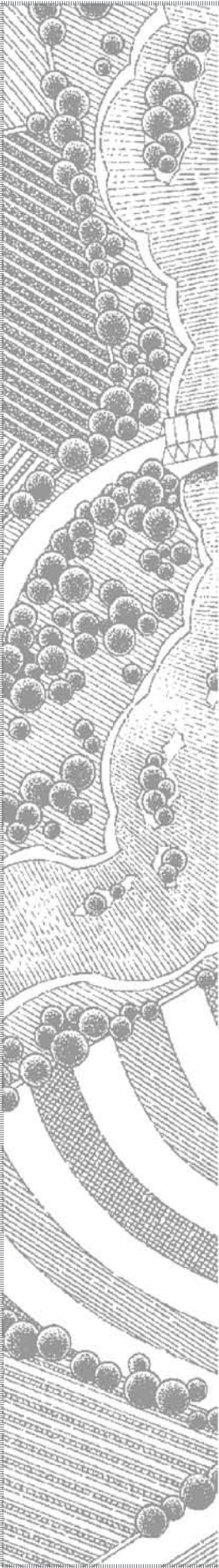
Another way to have help through the season is to ask a number of assistants to be in charge of minor repetitive chores every week. In this way, their assignment is long term but still easy to handle. For instance, none of the vendors would have time to help you hang signs every market morning. But if each was in charge of the one sign nearest to their truck, they could do it every time.

#### Build Support

The best way to have a large volunteer force to whom you can delegate jobs is by encouraging support throughout the season. Kas Gurtler, market manager in Port







Townsend, Washington, says that delegation fortunately is not a problem for her because not only does she have a large and active board to back her up but she also has many “friends of the market.” Their Friends program invites the community to become members by paying an annual fee that gives that individual the right to vote on market issues. Members of Friends of the Market are interested in the market being a success, shop there regularly, and are a ready source of volunteers when needed.

### Show Appreciation

Be sure to thank your volunteers when they have helped. Send a card or include their name in the market’s newsletter. Mention their help in front of others—it always feels good to be recognized. Even something as small and simple as mentioning them to shoppers on market day can help a person feel valued: “Do you like the new banners? Joe here and his family volunteered their time to put those together.”

### Celebrate Volunteerism

End-of-the season parties and celebrations are opportunities to appreciate the time others have put into the market. Whether it is a Boy Scout troop, the city, or senior citizens that helped out, throwing a party in honor of your volunteers makes them feel better about assisting you again next year.

### Jobs That Are Good to Delegate

Some tasks are ideal for delegation. Whenever you can, take the opportunity to share them with someone else. You may find that certain individuals are especially adept at detail work, phone calls, or artwork. Which is great—because those are the types of assignments that you want to pass around. Jobs to delegate include:

**Repetitive tasks.** Those “I have to do it again . . .” jobs seem boring, in part because you have done them a million times. Other people may have fun doing them for a while. And before they get sick of it, have them help train someone else.

**Gathering information.** Whether it is calling around, handing out a survey, or searching the internet, another person can help. Often that person’s approach is different than yours, which may lead them to find new information. It also helps your assistant learn more about the topic and get a better overall perspective on a market issue.

**Job-building skills.** Delegation is important not only to help you manage your time but to also help others build skills and expand their knowledge and interests. Assignments that help someone move ahead, train for future employment, or just learn the ins and outs of the community are helpful to you both. There may be a high school or college student in the area who would like to work in community development, agricultural extension, or city government who would like to be an intern.

**Time-consuming details.** The time to form the idea of a project is often much shorter than the time it takes to perfect the details, especially if it is intricate, colorful, or in need of many edits. Intermediate steps can be completed by someone else, though you should maintain control over the final result.

### Jobs NOT to Delegate

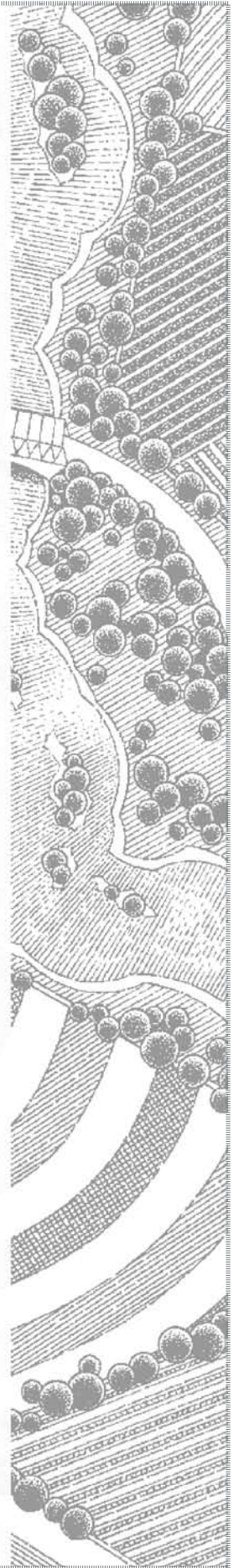
Setting long-term goals and a vision are things that can be done only by the market manager or by the board, depending on how active the board is. It is important to get input from others and to involve vendors, the community, and city officials in the process, but management has the ultimate responsibility for directing the market. You, as the manager, are the one with the broad-based knowledge and well-rounded perspective that is needed to plan for the future of the market.

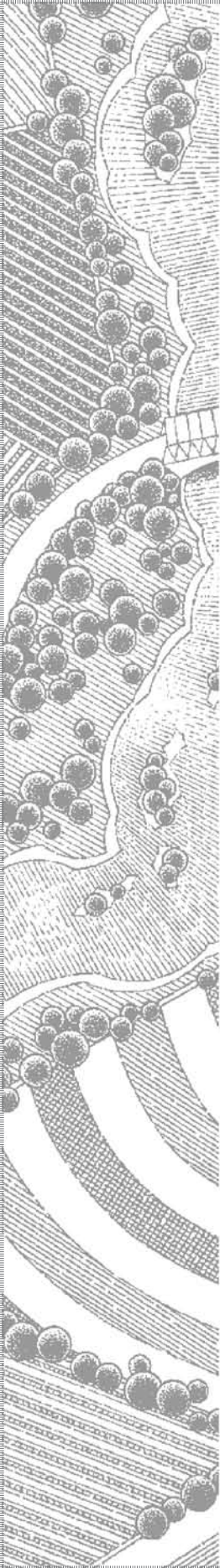
Three other key management responsibilities should never be delegated:

- ▣ Feedback, whether positive or negative, should always be given by the manager.
- ▣ Do not delegate the responsibility to discipline or fire someone, as appealing as it may be to let someone else deal with it.
- ▣ Never delegate jobs that are expected to be politically sensitive. For example, a task like dropping off fliers at the town hall and other government buildings may be a great one to delegate. But if relations with one of the officials are tense and he is likely to put the volunteer on the spot, you should take care of that building yourself.

### Fairness and Morale

It is important to remember when delegating jobs that your volunteers and employees will be interpreting your choices. For instance, if you make a decision about which task to give somebody, others may feel it was done unfairly. It is quite natural as a manager to continuously rely on a few dependable assistants, but con-





sider that other members may see you as having favorites or feel there is a group of insiders who control the market. Do some community members feel that their voices are not being heard in the organizational process? Do farmers resent feeling that they are not involved enough in decision-making? Like many other tasks a market manager has to fulfill, delegation is a matter of balance between your managerial needs, the interests and perspectives of others, and the conditions in which you are operating.

If you continually delegate a majority of tasks to the same individuals, it may be interpreted in another way—as a sign of disrespect instead of trust. You may be sending the message that you believe these individuals have nothing better to do or that their own work is secondary to the assigned tasks. If the jobs that are delegated are not considered meaningful, then assistants may feel undervalued and disliked.

Managers cannot anticipate with certainty how assistants will perceive assignments. Something you consider fun and creative may seem to your assistant as excessive and unnecessary. Likewise, a serious and important job may be something you delegate to help a person gain skills, but they may see it as an impossible burden that you did not want to take on yourself. Failing to take note of such perceptions can leave well-intentioned managers with a load of work and no one to help. Keep in mind, though, that how you delegate work is one factor among many in the overall environment of the market; if you are straightforward, respectful, and skilled in communication and other management skills, creating a generally positive atmosphere, then your staff, vendors, and others will give you leeway for trial and error as you learn to delegate.

## Conclusion

As a market manager, you may be working with a board of directors, volunteers, friends, community members, local government offices, and farmers. It is important to be sensitive to the messages that are conveyed by delegation. It is an important tool for your job, and you and the market can benefit greatly from your skillful use of delegation. Only in large, urban market offices is there likely to be a manager with a number of actual employees so most managers rely on people volunteering their time. Even for the smallest of markets, the workload needs to be shared. By becoming a good delegator, you can share the work appropriately, judiciously, and effectively.



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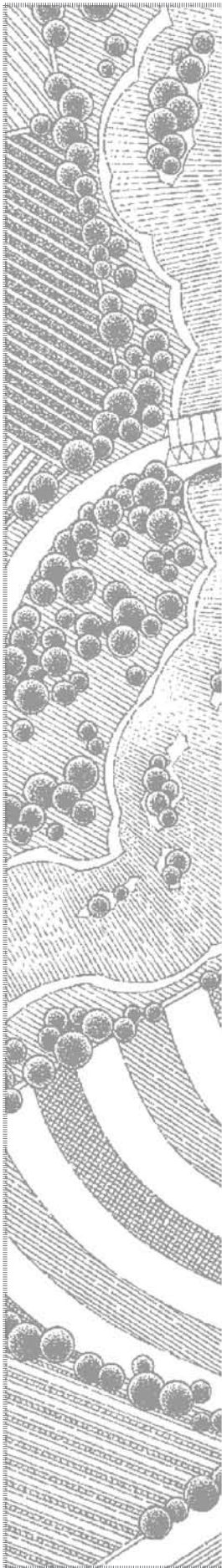
## Conclusion

**I**n this volume we have discussed the skills needed to be effective as a market manager, as well as the stakeholder relationships that occupy the manager's time and energy. As you gain experience, grow your market, and face new challenges, it is likely you will revisit these chapters and find new points to be useful and relevant. One farmer described his learning as a spiral:

*You kind of experiment a little bit and you say, 'Okay, yeah, I have gotten here to the next level' ... experiment a little bit ... 'Okay, I am up to the next level.' So you are always going up. It just feels like you are going in circles sometimes."*

As you proceed through the seasons of the market and cycles of learning and experiment, this book is designed to accompany you and provide information and tips to consider when you need them.

In the introduction to this book, we encouraged you to find peers and possibly a mentor to share or guide your skill development. Experience and the support of colleagues are two of the most powerful sources of learning and growth. While some task-oriented managers may perceive time spent with colleagues to be unproductive, in fact the time it takes to reflect on your experiences and share lessons with colleagues is well spent. By sharing experiences and perspectives, you can develop new ways of looking at familiar situations and learn more than you might on your own. This pays off in skills and in your ability to lead your market to success, which leads to positive results for all your stakeholders. The information in this volume, including tips from experienced market managers, can be a part of your road map to success as a manager.







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## The Farmers Market Management Series

Several years ago, having observed trends in the evolution of food marketing, I decided it would be a good idea to professionalize management of farmers markets by, among other things, developing and making available a Farmers Market Management professional development curriculum. I approached the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA AMS) for seed money to launch the project, and the agency was supportive in helping the UC Small Farm Center get the project off the ground.



The project has proceeded deliberately since its inception with support from the Small Farm Center.

Happily, the center has now produced three primary volumes as a foundation for the curriculum: *Starting a New Farmers Market*, *Farmers Market Management Skills*, and *Growing Your Farmers Market*.

I wish to acknowledge the early support of this project by Errol Bragg of USDA AMS and, more recently, by USDA's Risk Management Agency. Also, farmers market managers throughout the country were extremely cooperative in sharing their experiences and insights regarding the many aspects of their work.

The UC Small Farm Program and Small Farm Center were early advocates of farmers markets and facilitated education in this regard. This series is part of the Small Farm Program's contribution to the 21st Century's evolution of farmers markets. Please read also our companion farmers market publications, *Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets* and *Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues*.

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