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May 22, 2008

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The "plan" we came up with didn't really fit the form I had proposed using. First, many of the items are not cost associated. Instead, they need to be assigned to an individual who can see the project through from start to finish. Second, many of the ideas need more development prior to implementation. Again, an individual needs to take charge for research/development.

The following outline covers all of the ideas we came up with at the 5/21/08 meeting. Blank lines on the left side are for assignments. Maybe the growth committee can tackle filling in some names for these items.

2008 Marketing Action Plan

Goal 1: Membership Drive

- _____ 1. August Membership Drive: 80 in 8/08!
 - Develop a tiered membership plan that would allow people to contribute money. Growth committee has already developed some ideas along these lines.
 - Offer premiums to members who sign up or renew during membership drive month. Premiums might be tied to membership tiers.
 - Hold a special drawing for the August renewing/new member drive

- _____ 2. Create a word-of-mouth membership program that would reward members who bring in other new members. For example, get 5 people to sign up and be upgraded to working member status for a year. This would require some sort of tracking system.

- _____ 3. Coordinate in-store tastings and local producer promotions with membership drive month.

- _____ 4. Growth committee may need to fill in more details here . . .

Out year ideas:

- find ways to promote special products to new markets (ie. recipes in the paper, handouts to community groups, etc.)
- delivery to outlying areas/shutins/people who don't drive much.
- create an outreach staff position whose job is to build membership
- sponsor movies on topics that further VCF (nutrition, food, cooperative business model)
- try to get ASC to offer some sort of new student orientation packet with healthy information
- coordinate with ASC student activity groups like hiking or rock climbing groups who might be interested in healthy food
- coordinate with ASC athletic program
- stickers/bumper stickers; plaster the community with them

Goal 2: More Advertising; More Effective Advertising

- _____ 1. Work on ways to improve store visibility.

Truck with a sign in the parking lot, balloons, moving/waving things in the parking lot to attract attention—whatever can be done to highlight the store’s location within Villa Mall.

_____ 2. Spotlights on local growers. Coordinate with the seasonal advertising themes and use concurrent messages in print, radio, newsletter and in-store advertising.

-Work with local producers to develop some coop advertising programs where the local producers chip in a fee to have their names/logos specifically included in advertising. This program would help supplement VFC’s advertising budget and would help small producers with small advertising budgets reach a larger audience. (ie. group ad buys).

_____ 3. Promote the heck out of VFC niche as a specialty grocery store.
- emphasize “specialty” nature of store
- promote on-staff experts who are available to answer questions
- promote personalized shopping experience—small town, small store

atmosphere

- use recipes in advertisements that include ingredients available at VFC

_____ 4. Develop Seasonal Themes and center advertising promotions around those themes.
Tentative Theme Months would be January, April, July and October.
Proposed theme topics for 2008 into 2009
July: Summer Harvest Season
October: Fall Bounty
January: Kicking the Winter Blues
April: Getting Ready for Spring

Print, radio and other ads would focus in on these general themes. Tell local papers about ad criteria (ie. Ads for this quarter must include the phrase “Summer Harvest” in the headline

products.
-Coordinate themes with in-store tastings.
-Create handwritten information cards about products. Place (tape?) near
-Reprint reviews and reports from reputable sources. Place near products.

_____ 5. Work on a brochure series of flyer series to promote specific aspects of VCF: local producers, high-quality healthful food, special orders, non-corporate cooperative business structure, recipes

-Distribute through: local health organizations (Healthlines), chamber welcome packets (if they exist!), business recruiting packets, visitor/tourism offices

Out year ideas:

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- purchase ball-point pens with VCF name and "Inside Villa Mall" on them; distribute widely
- expand/promote web page
- add TV advertising on KENY
- expand radio ads to include sponsorship of specific programs or even create specific programs
- expand advertising area
- use demographic information to better focus ads to specific target markets
- work on ways to promote VCF as a place where average people can find better food to eat
- improve presence at kid events, senior events, community events
- garden camp
- gift baskets for community fund-raising projects
- billboards (find someone who wants to donate one or donate a spot for one)

Goal 3: Increase Average Daily Sales

- _____ 1. Create an in-store recipe rack with recipes that highlight products offered for sale in the store. Some recipe cards might be placed near specific store products if space allows.
- _____ 2. Develop two or three specific punch card promotions. For example, buy 5 of *** and get the 6th *** at half price. Present card at register for tracking, or possibly see if POS system can deal with this. Or for every \$100 you spend, get \$5 off or a free bag of noodles or . . .
- _____ 3. Electronic gift cards. Available for purchase. Perhaps certain dollar purchases qualify for a discount on the card.
- _____ 4. Promote special order service. This may include developing a small handout or flyer that tells people the service is available, how to specify products, costs, etc.

Out year ideas:

- Make sure distributor specials are available on web page
- Sell store promo items such as hats, T-shirts, bumper stickers emblazoned with the Valley Food Co-op Logo and tag line (Good Food Naturally).
- Coupons
- Floor ads
- Partnerships with other businesses
- Cook-off contest or recipe contest
- Partnerships with community and health groups. LiveWell!

Goal 4: Improved Communication and Consistency with other Projects

- _____ 1. Find a person who can keep the web page updated. At a minimum, offer working member status.
 - Post monthly sales file on page so shoppers can see what is on sale without coming into the store
 - Move newsletter onto web site
- _____ 2. Develop an email list for the newsletter to help cut on mailing costs. Members could choose to receive the newsletter by snail mail or e-mail.
- _____ 3. Develop a VCF list serve where people could ask other people questions about products, post recipes, find other shoppers (especially for those in outlying areas who might be able to coordinate with others to cut on gas expenses)
- _____ 4. Work on building a better demographic profile of membership: where they live, age, sex, income levels, primary reasons for shopping at VCF, etc. This may or may not eventually lead to a database on shopper statistics.