

Top Marketing Ideas for Agri-tourism Operations

Adapted from a fact sheet written by Mike Wetter

1. **Happy customers are the most important key to success.** Customer service is the most critical element. The level of customer service will determine repeat visits and “word-of-mouth” advertising. Learn their names. Remember what they like and have it ready for them. Keep a database if you can’t keep it all in your head. The little touches make all the differences.
2. Develop a mailing list. Get names from outdoor magazines, associations, ODFW and other sources of people that like outdoor activities. Your mailing list is your most important asset. Mail to your customers *at least* twice a year.
3. People don’t come to hunt or fish or ride a horse or tractor. They come to have fun and relax. You are in the hospitality business -- take care of your customers and you will succeed. Always ask your customers what they liked about their stay and what could be improved.
4. Cater to as “high end” a customer as you can and don’t be afraid to charge for your service. This is not a volume business, so you can’t go low-end and make money. If you target people with money and charge more for your service, people will expect more from you. You don’t have to be “upscale,” but you do need to offer a quality experience.
5. Take care of the details. Make sure that your telephone is answered professionally (“Anderson Ranch” rather than “hello”). Your answering machine should have a professional message. Return calls promptly.
6. Let your neighbors know about you. Join the Chamber of Commerce, talk to gas station owners, cafes, Elk clubs, motels, and neighboring farms. Give people your brochure and make sure that people in your area know about you. Start close to home at first and move out gradually. It is much less expensive to attract a client from Portland, Boise, or Seattle than from Japan or Germany. Get listed in the Complete Guide to Ranching Vacations in North America ((916) 583-6926).
7. Send information about your company to magazines and newspapers. Send them news releases and story ideas. Invite them out for a free stay. Follow mailings with personal calls. Think of things that will interest them. The Oregon Tourism Commission has a media guide, available for \$6, which will provide ideas for how to work with the press. Call (503) 986-0000 to order a copy.
8. Obtain brochures and literature from other operations that are similar to yours. See what they are offering and what it costs. Look at their brochures to see what you like and don’t like. Improve your materials accordingly. Get addresses and phone numbers of operations from outdoor recreation magazines. Owners are generally willing to give you a half-hour of free advice. Call them and tell them you are just starting out and ask if you can have a few minutes of their time to ask some questions.
9. Put signs on your property that are visible from the road. Make sure people can find you and have a way to contact you. Call the Travel Information Council about signage on state and federal highways at (503) 373-1042
10. Produce quality brochures and PR materials. On brochures, less is more. Don’t clutter it with lots of words. Use photos. Hire a graphic artist or get lots of feedback from other business people before you go to print. Don’t use a photocopier. Color is costlier than a black and white brochure, but it shows a commitment to quality and attracts a lot more attention. Another option which may be more useful than brochures are websites. More and more people are using websites to plan vacations and get information. Discuss the importance of developing and maintaining a dynamic website.

