

Business Model: California Agriculture Marketing Agency

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Introduction

The importance of creating a marketing agency specializing in agriculture is to bridge the gap between producers and consumers. The lack of transparency from the producer has created a torn industry causing the average consumer to be questioning his or her food, or simply not understanding the agricultural way of life. An agricultural marketing firm in California can represent and advocate for local businesses to start closing the producer to consumer gap.

The American farmer excels at many things, but lacks in public communications. Modern day farmers have been able to produce more food than ever despite fewer resources and inputs. As the population rises and more people migrate from rural areas to cities, the population involved in agriculture drops and a knowledge gap is created (Larson, 2017). Simply due to where people live, there is a disconnect between the public and story of agriculture. The typical farmer is viewed as a simpleton, who only went to work and came home (Larson, 2017). Today, farming continues as a generational business built upon former family success and having a profitable future for additional generations — farming is still a way of life. According to Allin, agriculture faces a “so-called ‘farm problem,’” (Allin, 1958). A farm problem is a “barrier to better public understanding by urban majority of the nation of the problems and needs of agriculture (Allin, 1958).

How It Works

The world of public relations and agencies is constantly evolving. Companies can switch from agency to agency based on pricing, services, campaign ideas and more. Public relations agencies and business operate on behalf of their clients with limited personal investment. Meaning, PR firms and advertising agencies are to perform necessary communications work; “not personal- just business,” (PR News, 2003). The main goal is getting the job done well, in a timely fashion and within the established budget. While building personal relationships with clients develops business, measuring PR success means producing quality work that fits the business’s finances and needs.

The agency needs to be well versed in the subject and nature of the client’s business. Requests for proposal (RFP) of PR work, similar to pitching a sale, needs to be thorough, yet mindful of the services the potential client wants and can afford (Larson, 2017).

Public relations review (2010), found:

Even though public relations is of value to society, academic studies have found that journalists have consistently used the term public relations in negative contexts. In 1993, Spicer analyzed 84 articles that contained the term public relations, and found the term was used in a negatively embedded context more than 80% of the time. Public relations was overwhelmingly portrayed as an attempt to sidestep or manipulate the truth. (pg. 320)

Often times public relations is criticized in the media, calling it a publicity stunt or attempting to fog the truth. In some cases, this is unfortunately true. The only way to go about representing a company or industry is to work positively and honestly. The public relations review found an overwhelming amount of consumer’s immediately related public relations to being something distasteful or negative.

While this can be disheartening for any profession, it goes to show how much change is truly needed in the agriculture industry.

Model Agency

In the world of agricultural public relations, Osborn & Barr (O+B) is excelling. This full-service marketing agency was originally opened in St. Louis, Missouri, and founded in 1988 with four business partners. This firm has clients such as Monsanto and John Deere. Owner Steven Barr states, “We don’t spend a lot of time talking about ourselves... Ninety-nine percent of what we do is talk about our clients and their products and services,” (Barr, 2005). Osborn and Barr are responsible for the brains behind the ingenious branding, marketing, campaigns and more. After the 9-11 economy, O+B was able to capitalize on other agencies closing and gain fallen accounts. Not only did the firm gain clients, they were able to build their personnel as well (Osborn & Barr, 2005).

Methods and Results

Based on research of other leading marketing firms dealing with agriculture, a new firm will closely model the work seen from Osborn Barr. The following describes a business plan to become California’s go-to agency representing agriculture.

a. Create company name:

The author’s chose to name their business AgMark LLC because they will strive to base work surrounding the marketing of agriculture. The short, yet meaningful title will catch peoples’ attention, while also being taken seriously in the industry. The authors selected LLC structure in hopes to protect their families, livelihood and themselves.

b. Company mission and vision statement:

When starting this project, AgMark LLC felt compelled to represent and advocate for California agriculture specifically. The founding partners grew up as long-time California residents and observed California’s abundance of agriculture be misrepresented. Based off of these preconceived notions, AgMark LLC led to the following mission and vision statements.

1. Mission statement: AgMark strives to be the leading agricultural marketing firm in California, giving businesses throughout the state the necessary tools to promote their operation and the agriculture industry as a whole.
2. Vision statement: AgMark plans to advocate and empower agricultural businesses in continuing to feed the world’s growing population.

c. Core Values:

AgMark LLC implements the following core values to create a purposeful, goal-oriented and aspiring work culture.

1. Be honest
2. Have integrity
3. Value relationships
4. Encourage growth
5. Live passionately

d. Company location and office:

AgMark LLC will be headquartered in California's capitol, Sacramento. This central location will successfully compete with other previously established firms in a mecca of legislation and policy. AgMark LLC looks forward to expanding across the nation to widen its clientele base and representation of other industries over time.

e. Finances of company startup and rates:

Based off of real estate research, rent in downtown Sacramento will cost approximately \$4,500-\$6,500 monthly (Zillow, 2016).

f. Service options:

The service options AgMark LLC provides clients include: strategizing and research, branding, advertising and marketing, digital and social presence, public relations, media planning and buying and experiential studies.

Conclusion

AgMark LLC intends to be a premiere stop for marketing an agricultural business and the industry as a whole. The agricultural industry lacks advocacy and AgMark will strive to fill that void. Educating the consumer is the top priority. Educating the public can only benefit the agriculture industry. If society knows agriculture's story there is no room for misunderstandings and defamation. Creating a public relations firm specialized for agriculture will help educate, advocate and market the industry. Connecting the consumer and producer will ultimately educate the public and better the agriculture industry as a whole.

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