Collaborative Marketing Case Study: Sue Garing/Honey & Garlic

Sue Garing has operated Sue Garing, DBA Sue Garing Honey & Garlic since 2003 selling raw garlic, honey and honey products through a variety of marketing venues. She has 54 number of hives and sells ~$30,000 of product/year.

When Sue started participating in this project she was doing the following types of collaborative marketing:

* Sharing a table at a farmers’ market – helping another vendor who didn’t have time for that market
* Consignment of her products at local stores
* Some wholesale. She was currently preparing marketing materials for stores carrying her products

Recordkeeping has always been a strong skill for Sue. She keeps sales records of what and where products sell. But most of her technique as it relates to new venues and product lines is “try and see what happens. Her participation in this project has given her the resources to evaluate new venues for sales based on quantitative data as opposed to qualitative.

Prior to participation in this project Sue’s greatest concerns about collaborative marketing were:

* Time and money
* Profit margins
* Finding complimentary products
* Concerns about how to collaborate legally with her fellow honey producers (NYS has strict guidelines on the resale of honey and when someone becomes a “packer”)
* A lack of education among producers on marketing and collaborative marketing
* Insurance, transportation and storage for larger amounts of products

While participating in this project Sue Garing Honey & Garlic used the “checklist” created and provided by the project lead to make the following decisions:

* Dropped a store 🡪 for lack of payment of wholesale invoices ($450). This was someone acting as a transport to New York City for wholesale accounts.
* Added four stores 🡪 two wholesale, includes Taste of NY, one consignment, and one “rent-a-space” by the month ~$2000 of income – but the year-end financials are not current.
* Investigating creating a coop of local honey producers 🡪 for new regional farmers’ market under construction. This will help address legal collaboration among honey producers in the region under the “Southern Tier Beekeepers” – a local membership organization for beekeepers in NY and Pennsylvania.
* Collaboration with a fellow farmer at a farmers’ market to help round out product offerings for both $690

When asked what the economic and other impacts have been in relation to her participation in this project Sue relayed the following information:

* “Discussing issues around the table during this project, in addition to data presented, has given me insight into what the “norms” are for my area.   In particular what level of sales is reasonable and thus whether a particular market is worth my time.    I will shave down to two farmers markets next year, from the four I did this year.
* Talking to other vendors about their own stores, and wholesale experience, and work day has been a learning opportunity.  I am increasing my presence in stores where I can find a “reasonable” wholesale or consignment prices so I can spend less time marketing and more doing production.   I am continuing to invest in labor saving equipment so this is less of a 24/7 job.”

Sue’s favorite “resource provided” was listening to fellow vendors when those participating came together to talk about their experiences. Even more feedback on how producers balance production and marketing would be good.  Information on “what works” and what doesn’t is valuable.