



HOW TO PREPARE FOR A BUYER MEETING

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Introduction

First impressions are of utmost importance. Whether you are going on a first date or making first contact with a buyer - you want them to think you are great from the start!

While there are differences between supplying retail and food service in either the domestic or export markets, there are many similarities as well. Domestic and international buyers cannot overstate the importance of building good relationships. Building good relationships is key. Before you make an appointment, **do your homework**. Get to know who you are meeting with and be prepared to provide the information he or she needs!

Here are some suggestions for maximizing your first contact with a buyer:

Reconnaissance

Cool word! We've extracted this definition from Wikipedia:

"A mission to obtain information by visual observation or other detection methods, about the activities and resources for later analysis and action". That's exactly what you need to do!

Below is a list of some of the reconnaissance homework you can do before contacting a buyer.

Homework

- Tour stores or visit restaurants you want to sell to in order to get an idea of how you and your product fits in or can help the organization to meet its goals.
- Talk to staff, store managers, chefs, restaurant owners or consumers and find out what they need and are looking for.
- Attend industry events, conferences, workshops, and tradeshow and Network with other industry members.
- Read and keep up to date with market drivers and trends related to food consumption in domestic and international markets at both the store level and in foodservice.
- Check out your competition - remember there is always competition! Be prepared to answer how your product compares to competing products in terms of product quality, availability, pricing, special deals and promotional allowances, etc.

Information

Be sure to supply all the information a buyer will need to contact you and that will leave a good impression about your company and you.

Company Information

- Company Name (Legal Name)
- Complete Mailing and Physical Address
- Phone (Landline and cell)
- Fax
- Website
- Facebook Page
- Twitter

Contact Information

- Name(s)
- Title(s)
- Email
- Phone
- Cell

Company Profile

Provide a brief description of your company, operations, the products you sell, food channels of focus (i.e. retail, food service, whole sale, farmers markets, etc.). (Note: Be concise! Showcase and promote your company in 500 words or less)

Here's an example of a memorable, informative profile:

We make great treats! Established in 2010 the Best Treat Company makes the best dog cookies that we have ever tried – not that we are biased or anything! No kidding aside, we take pride in the fact that our cookies have been served at Grandma's bridge games! We use the finest human grade ingredients sourced from BC farmers from all over our beautiful province.

The Best Treat Company had a humble beginning. Our dog Rover developed food sensitivities and could no longer eat store bought treats. Our family is famous for turning challenges into opportunities and Rover became our son Gilbert's science project. Since 2010 Gilbert has developed a line of dog treats that will delight the pets in your life too!

The Best Treat Company is located in the hamlet of Yahk, BC along the historic Moyie River. Our state of the art processing facility allows us to produce the highest quality, safe and nutritious treats on the market. Best Treats are available in three different flavours – Rover's Special, Grandma's Treat and Gilbert's Secret Recipe. You can buy Best Treats at our store in Yahk and if Yahk is a bit out of your way our great distribution partners allow us to offer our products at fine pet stores everywhere and are soon to be available at Urban Fare!

Photos are a great addition – a photo of grandma, her friends and their dogs around card table would draw some attention!

Market Readiness

Are you market ready? This is a short list of some of the things that you should have in place if you are to supply a retailer or food service provider with product. Ensure you are able to confidently answer these questions before you set up a meeting with a buyer.

(The acronyms are spelled out at the end of this document.)

- Business Plan (where you are headed, plan for growth)
- Distribution Expertise (explain that you know how to deliver your product)
- ECC Net
- EDI Enabled
- EFT Enabled
- Federally Inspected
- Food Safety Plan
- HACCP Certified
- Insurance (\$2 million minimum)
- Marketing Plan
- Meet Canadian Regulations (food safety, packaging etc.)
- MMBC Stewardship Plan
- Packaging & Labelling
- Production Capacity
- Provincially Inspected
- Recall Procedure
- Special Certifications (Kosher, Organic, Gluten Free ...)
- Successful Sales
- Traceability

Markets

Where you are selling your product(s)? Examples include but are not limited to one or more farmers markets, festivals, gift shows, small independent grocery stores, a limited number of “chain” stores willing to buy direct from the producer, select restaurants or through online sales. Be prepared to answer this question.

Food Channels

Which food channels are you currently or interested in entering or selling more product to? (select all that apply)

- Food Service
- Local Farmers Markets
- Processors
- Online
- Retail (independent and chains)
- Other

Product Categories

Be prepared to tell the buyer which category(ies) your product(s) fall under. Each buyer is responsible for specific categories. You want to make sure you talk to the right person with decision-making authority.

- Bakery
- Beverage - Non Alcoholic (e.g. Juice, Water, Energy Drinks etc.)
- Beverage - Alcoholic Beverage
- Cereal, Grain, Pasta or Rice
- Condiments (Dips, Sauces etc.)
- Confectionery
- Dairy
- Deli
- Desserts
- Entrees and Ready Meals
- Fish & Seafood
- Floral & Nursery
- Frozen Foods

- Honey & Sweeteners Ingredients
- Meat & Poultry
- Natural Health Products
Natural/Organic Foods
- Pet Food & Supplies
- Produce (Fresh)
- Snack Foods
- Special Dietary (Gluten Free, Kosher,
etc.)
- Other

Product Description

Describe the specific products that you want to discuss during a meeting with a buyer. (Again be concise - make sure to highlight how your product is better/different)

Product Sell Sheets

Product sell sheets are typically eye-catching one page information sheets on your product and things to include are listed below. These sell sheets should be high quality and in full colour. This, along with product samples, is what you would bring to your first meeting with a buyer.

- Company Name and Contact Information
- Company Logo
- Product/Brand Logo (if different than company)
- Product Description
- Photo of Retail/Food Service Package
- Photo of Product in Use
- Photo of Scannable Bar Code
- Individual Size and Weight of Retail Unit
- Units/Case
- Case Specifications - Weight, Dimensions, Number per Pallet etc.
- Photo of Case
- Order Information and Contact
- Minimum Order Amount
- Allowances, in-Store Demo Plan, Social Media Plan

Price Sheet

Bring a full product pricing sheet with you. The general recommendation is to have separate pricing sheets available but we recommend you do not include pricing on your sell sheets otherwise you will have to redo your fancy sell sheets every time product pricing changes or new deals are offered.

Congratulations! If you have answers to the above questions you have done your homework. It's time to book an appointment and market more B.C Agrifood and Seafood!

Definitions and Links

ECC Net - GS1 Canada's ECCnet Registry is Canada's national product registry. www.gs1ca.org

EDI - Electronic Data Interchange www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_data_interchange

EFT - Electronic Funds Transfer www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_funds_transfer

HACCP - Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazard_analysis_and_critical_control_points

MMBC - Multi-Material BC www.recyclinginbc.ca