

MARKET MANAGER?



The market manager **sets the tone and represents the market** both internally to vendors and externally to shoppers and market stakeholders.

The Role of the

MARKET MANAGER

THE FACE OF THE MARKET & SO MUCH MORE!

MARKET MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Market managers are responsible for all aspects of market operations during the season and the main contact for customers, vendors, volunteers, health inspectors, police, city transportation, sponsors, media and more. Responsibilities often include managing vendor relationships, coordinating setup and tear-down, promoting the market, operating the SNAP program (if applicable), answering customer or vendor questions, and assisting with the market's special events.

Market managers may be paid employees or they may be volunteers. Their job descriptions may be very specific or very informal. Regardless of their official position and job description, their actual responsibilities are likely to be similar.



Market Manager Job Description

The market manager must be reliable, self-motivated, and have good communication and customer service skills. The ideal candidate will be an enthusiastic advocate of the local food movement. Specific responsibilities will be determined by the needs of the customers, market partners, and market vendors. Generally, the market manager is responsible for the following activities:

MARKET OPERATIONS

- Arrive at market 2 hours before opening to coordinate setup
- Stay at market until all vendors have left (usually no more than 1 hour after)
- Set up welcome booth tent, table, and display
- Place directional signs promoting the market around the community at key locations prior to opening on each market day; remove at the close of market
- Coordinate vendor parking/setup to ensure vendors are in the correct space
- Staff the welcome booth, provide information to customers and help run the EBT/credit card machine

GENERAL MARKET SUPPORT

- Develop and maintain good relationships with staff, interns, vendors, customers, and the community
- Assist vendors, community representatives, and customers by providing market-related information, conflict resolution, and general aid as appropriate
- Enforce market rules
- Vendor recruitment
- Occasionally assist vendors by providing limited setup help and brief personal breaks and by assisting vendors with sales during especially busy times

OUTREACH & MARKETING

- Work with partners to promote the market through social media, e-newsletters, and community outreach
- Assist with development and coordination of special events

REQUIREMENTS

- Available during all market hours during the season
- Willing and able to work outside in all weather conditions
- Safely able to lift and carry at least 50 pounds



IS IT, ANYWAYS?

EXPLORE TYPES OF MARKET MANAGER POSITIONS

Farmers market manager positions vary. Larger, urban markets might employ a full-time, year-round director, while many smaller markets rely on an unpaid, part-time, seasonal volunteer or paid seasonal employee or contractor. And there are many possibilities in between.

For some managers, the market is the main focus of their job. For others, it's one of several responsibilities. Market managers may be employed by the market

itself or contracted through a university program, chamber of commerce, city government or economic development agency.

While there's no one-size-fits-all approach for market managers, there's likely someone else in the state who can relate to your situation. Connecting with fellow managers in similar -- and different! -- situations may be beneficial for you.



Let's Meet Some Market Managers!

This handbook includes stories, insight, and advice from all types of manager positions. Here are some of the managers you'll hear from:

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE AS MARKET MANAGER?



CHERYL AVERILL

Morrill Farmers Market

"Doing it all. Main roles are **communicating with vendors and organizing them, logistics, working out any issues--pulling it off!**"



LARRY KRAMER

Bennett Farmers Market

"**Marketing the market!** We have an electric sign we use for promotion and portable marquee signs that we rent. We set out yard signs the day before along the highway."



CHRIS GRESS

Nebraska City Farmers Market

"Getting the market started in Nebraska City. **Making sure people are aware of the rules and that they are followed.** Having good knowledge about the market, and its rules,"



ANNIE GLINES

Alma Farmers Market

"My role is to get people fresh fruit and veggies, and not have them shipped in-to show people that **this is what food should look and taste like.**"

It's More than

JUST A MARKET

HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR MARKET

At its heart, the farmers market is a place to buy and sell fresh, healthy, local foods. But in many communities, it's much more than that. Markets provide opportunities for collaboration between residents, vendors, volunteers, and local businesses and organizations. Markets began as a way to do

business, but have evolved into a way to connect people with their communities, food producers, and the land that surrounds them.

We've gathered some ways that Nebraska markets are collaborating and connecting within their communities.





PARTNERING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES TO DRAW CUSTOMERS

Nebraska City Farmers Market Nebraska City, NE

Each week, Market Manager Chris Gress calls into the radio station to give local residents a taste of what to expect that week at the market. Drawing in more shoppers (and hopefully more sales) is just one motivation for this weekly radio segment. As the manager for the Nebraska City Farmers Market, Chris knows that keeping shoppers interested week after week can be a challenge. That's where having strong relationships with local businesses comes into play.

Chris organizes a weekly giveaway at the market, each sponsored by a different local business. From water bottles and koozies, to cookies and ice cream sandwiches, getting businesses to support your

farmers market gets the community involved and creates new partnership opportunities.

HOW IT WORKS:

Chris contacts local businesses ahead of time, asking them to sponsor a particular week. Each business works with Chris to figure out a giveaway item that will be attractive to market-goers and any other details. In return, the business will be promoted through social media and on Chris' weekly call into the radio station.

TAKEAWAY IDEAS:

Give the participating businesses something in return. Promoting a local business through the market's media channels is a great way to support that business and broaden the audience of shoppers for the market.

ENDING THE YEAR STRONG WITH THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Beaver City Farmers Market Beaver City, NE

Sometimes, the best way to build community around your market has to do with scheduling. In Beaver City, the annual Eager Beaver Days in September is a guaranteed high-traffic event. Market manager Meredith Williams capitalized on this by aligning the market's final week to coincide with Eager Beaver Days.

In a rural farming community like Beaver City, the hot summer days don't draw as big of crowds, when most of the community is busy on the farm. Farmers market

vendors know that there will be some slow weeks in the summer, but it all will pay off come September when the community really comes out.

TAKEAWAY IDEAS

Recognizing the unique needs of your community is key to ensuring a successful market season. Rather than competing with other community events, aligning with them helps increase visitors to the market and builds stronger connections with the community. Reaching out to organizers for other groups and events during the winter is a great way to maximize your market's attendance.



GIVING BACK AND THANKS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Morrill Farmers Market Morrill, NE

Each year, the Morrill Farmers Market manager and vendors come together to provide a Thanksgiving meal for area residents in need. Sourcing the turkey and fixings from market vendors, the Thanksgiving meal provides a win-win for vendors and community members who otherwise wouldn't have a meal that day or would be eating alone.

As it turns out, the community members who took part in the Thanksgiving meal were so grateful that they chipped in what they could to show their support for the market and the value it brings to the community.



Build Community Around Your Farmers Market

ONCE A MONTH EVENING MARKET DRAWS A CROWD

Broken Bow Farmers Market Broken Bow, NE

Each month, the Broken Bow Farmers Market stays open into the evening to give people getting off work, and families, a chance to experience everything the market has to offer. Located in downtown Broken Bow, many customers come over the dinner hour to visit the market. These monthly evening markets expand access to the market for those customers who couldn't otherwise be there during the day. With live music and other fun activities, and no-cost booth fees for vendors, a strong community spirit forms around these special evening markets.



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PARTNER CONTRIBUTES TO MARKET

Statewide Farmers Markets, NE

Invite a local nonprofit or community-minded organization that can contribute to your market and your shoppers. Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska, a local food education program, conducted taste tests at farmers' markets using locally grown specialty crops. Other ideas include inviting a local animal shelter, library, or service provider to have a booth.



CULTIVATING THE ARTS AT THE MARKET

Thursday Evening Market Downtown Hastings, NE

There's something about live music at a farmers market that draws in community. The Thursday Evening Downtown Market in Hastings has seen this up close. Each year, manager Amy Hoagland works with the Hastings Arts Council to recruit and pay for local musicians to play for customers at the market. Compared to the larger Saturday market in Hastings, the Thursday market has more of a family feel. And the live music creates a focal point for families to get their market goods, spread out a blanket in the grass and enjoy local food and local music.





DOWNTOWN LOCATION ATTRACTS BROADER COMMUNITY

**Aurora Market on the Square
Aurora, NE**

When the Aurora Market on the Square sets up booths on Saturday mornings in downtown Aurora, local businesses open their doors early to welcome in the community. What could be better than stopping by the farmers market for fresh produce and then hitting shops and boutiques for other needs? How about a free petting zoo or a live musician? Local businesses and market vendors work together to draw in customers, to the benefit of all.

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE HEALTH

**Schuyler Farmers Market
Schuyler, NE**

Hospitals can be great partners for farmers markets. They exist to promote healthy behaviors for local community members, and eating healthy is a big part of that effort. In Schuyler, when the farmers market needed a new location, CHI Health was more than happy to offer free space in their parking lot. With the market right outside their door, CHI Health takes an

active role in the market, sampling out fresh produce items and talking about nutrition with customers. They also provide funding for market signage and other programming; a great partnership between critical community resource providers.

NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK BRINGS FUN EVENTS, AND PLENTY OF VENDORS

**Sutton Farmers Market
Sutton, NE**

National Farmers Market Week is a celebration of the many benefits of farmers markets for communities across the country, and it served as the perfect backdrop for the Sutton Farmers Market annual big event. In the weeks leading up to the big event, market manager Rebecca Plettner started collecting customer names to enter into a raffle for a big basket of market goodies. She also worked with the local newspaper to promote the event, and partnered with the library to have a kids story time and face painting. The event was a smash hit, bringing more customers and vendors than any other week throughout the season. And, importantly, it created an event that the whole community could participate in.

MORE IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

DEVELOP AN AMBASSADOR GROUP

Develop an ambassador group made up of your most supportive community members. They can help build connections, give feedback, organize events and fundraisers, and promote the market.

INCLUDE LOCAL ARTISTS

Invite a community theater to perform a teaser of their summer play, a local author to do a short reading, or museum to facilitate an activity related to a new exhibit.

WORK WITH MUNICIPALITIES

Collaborate with county conservation on a campfire skillet-cooking demo using locally grown produce.



STAY ACTIVE IN THE OFF-SEASON

Hold a pre- and post-season meeting with vendors, then organize an off-season potluck or training. If you have ambassadors or a committee, check in with them face-to-face, too. The connections you nurture in the off-season will help build your market community for the busy season.

A New Manager at

A NEW MARKET

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH A NEW MARKET

As a new manager starting a new market, it can be hard to know where to begin. Determining if there is enough supply and demand to create a new market is one of the most important considerations. Don't skimp on conversations with other area market managers, potential vendors, and community members when weighing the decision to start a new market. Sometimes, finding creative ways to support existing markets, or working to expand their reach and access is the best way forward. The sample timeline (right) lays out a suggested order for the many tasks required to launch a market. Certain to-dos need to be completed before others can happen. For example: you'll want to set your market schedule before you lock in vendors—to ensure the vendors will be available during your days and times. Keep in mind that this timeline is based on a 9-12 month period. If you have less time to plan and prepare, the tasks will need to be condensed into a tighter time frame.



CHERYL AVERILL

Morrill Farmers Market

"Listen to the people, listen to the vendors, make sure **everyone has a say in what's going on**. If you're a part of the decision-making, you will be happier."

ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE

"Lots and lots and lots of advertising will be needed if starting new. Use Buy-Sell-Trade groups on Facebook...and embrace technology. Take vendor photos every single week and post all the pictures. This makes a big difference."

-Helen Gartner, Plattsmouth Farmers Market



Countdown to Opening Day!

**12-9
mo.**

12-9 MONTHS OUT

- Continue to research nearby markets (online and in-person)
- Talk to vendors and other market managers in the area
- Identify local community partners
- Talk with future customers about what they want
- Research the history of farmers markets in your area and reach out to those who have been involved
- Contact NDA, local health dept., and municipality to learn about requirements for markets and vendors

**9-6
mo.**

9-6 MONTHS OUT

- Select and reserve the location
- Set the schedule (season/months, days, times)
- Decide on your market business structure
- Secure local partnerships
- Recruit vendors
- Form a market committee

**6-3
mo.**

6-3 MONTHS OUT

- Finalize all your permits, insurance, and legal documents
- Start promoting your farmers market
- Create your branding and marketing materials
- Contact/register with NDA and local health dept.
- Develop your market rules and guidelines
- Create an emergency plan and weather policy
- Start fundraising and secure sponsors
- Plan special events for your market

**3-0
mo.**

3 MONTHS OUT-OPENING DAY

- Create the market layout
- Enlist volunteers and identify tasks
- Ramp up marketing efforts
- Schedule and carry out vendor meetings
- Design market signage and maps
- Create a master contact list
- Get on every local events calendar

**DAY
OF!**

OPENING DAY AND BEYOND!

- Communicate with vendors, volunteers, and partners
- Confirm attendance of vendors and volunteers
- Make sure you're available for all questions
- Start collecting vendor payments/dues
- Continue implementing your marketing plan
- Be ready for troubleshooting
- Keep track of market metrics
- Communicate with vendors, volunteers, and partners
- Ensure market safety and market rules are enforced
- Attend every market (be the first there, and last to leave)

A New Manager at

AN OLD MARKET

HOW TO TAKE THE LEAD AT AN EXISTING MARKET



When stepping into a manager role at an existing market, it can be challenging to know where to start. What is your role? What will the vendors and customers expect from you? Who is your support system? Should you make any changes?

All of these questions are important and should be answered in time. Steve Anderson from the Hebron Farmers Market encourages managers who are taking the reins at an existing market to be patient. He explains, "**Sometimes it takes some trial and error.** Otherwise, do your best to adhere to the rules and make sure to **be patient with vendors during the transition.**" With your priorities in order, you will find answers to your questions and be a guiding force for vendors and customers alike.



SUE DUBOIS

Wahoo Farmers Market

"Don't be afraid to make changes to improve the market, but don't make changes just to make changes."

Sorting Out Your Priorities

HIGH PRIORITY

TALKING & LISTENING

- Meet with the previous farmers market manager
- Get a full description of your job duties
- Understand your role at the market
- Visit other nearby farmers markets
- Get to know other market managers in the area
- Hold a meeting with previous/existing vendors
- Reach out individually to customers

ANALYZING YOUR RESOURCES

- Locate marketing materials
- Learn to use the payment system (if applicable)
- Get social media and email login information
- Check on permits, insurance, and licenses
- Find the market map or existing vendor layout
- Read through and update your rules/regulations
- Repair and replace market supplies, if needed
- Make sure information on website is up-to-date



MEDIUM PRIORITY

ARRANGING FOR EXTRA HELP

- Arranging for extra help
- Find volunteers to help with day-of tasks
- Form a support team (vendors, partners, friends)
- Send a year-end survey to vendors to collect feedback and improvements for next season



LOW PRIORITY

BRANDING & LOGOS

For the first year, your time and energy should be focused on having conversations, building relationships, and figuring out how to run the market. Even if you don't love the existing logo or branding, you can still work with it. Save these types of changes for the off-season or next year when you have a better grasp on your role and the market as a whole.

MAKING BIG CHANGES

Take the first year to figure out how the market works. Avoid knee jerk reactions and changes based on feeling pressured. Be strategic about the changes you do make. In many cases, it will be wise to wait until you have a year of experience under your belt before making adjustments to the market.



What Your Vendors

WISH YOU KNEW

WE ASKED, VENDORS ANSWERED

...ABOUT CONSISTENCY

"You need consistent vendors showing up every time, so customers can get used to it. **Consistency is the best.**"

"Humans are creatures of habit. Consistency is important. **Changing anything--time, date, location, vendor arrangement, parking, or even the information booth--will impact your vendors and your customers.**"

...ABOUT PRODUCTS

"**You've got to have a core group of vegetable vendors.** Period. Arts and crafts and baked goods add to the ambiance, but you need vegetables."

...ABOUT MARKETING THE MARKET

"While the market itself may last only a few hours, farmers have spent days harvesting, cleaning, and packing. On market day, more time is spent loading, driving, and setting up. When all of that is taken into consideration, it's hard to turn a profit if the market isn't well-attended. **It's so important to have a market manager that pulls out all the stops to make sure the market is a well-advertised, fun atmosphere that people don't want to miss! The more customers that show up, the more vendors that will be able to commit to attending consistently.**"

...ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE

"**I only have control over the customer's experience with me. I don't have control over their experience with the market as a whole.** Can they find the bathroom? Are there garbage cans? Do they know where to park? Is there a friendly community vibe? It takes everyone at the market to make customer service work."



"**It goes a long way when the market manager has positive energy and is proactive in helping vendors and customers**—not just sitting at the information booth and waiting for problems to come to them."

...ABOUT COMMUNICATION

"The best managers make sure to listen to vendor and customer feedback. Being able to make someone feel like they're heard is important. It is equally important to keep your response to feedback in line with market goals. **Keep it professional!**"

...ABOUT COMMUNITY

"**Make sure it is kid friendly, and friendly for the elderly.** Choose a safe area. Try to meet the needs of the community."

"Every town is going to be different, so you really have to **know your local people - build connections, relationships, and trust.**"



...ABOUT CHANGES OVER TIME

“There are two things I would want a new manager to know. **First, when you have that many independent entrepreneurs grouped together, it is rare to get 100% consensus. Secondly, you’re not alone.** The board or committee is there for a reason. You don’t have to shoulder the full burden of conflict and problem-solving.”