Marketing Rural Communities: Converting Business Models Into Community Practice

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Can we use business marketing principles to better market rural communities?

North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska

Research Components:
- Household surveys of new residents
- Labor vacancy surveys
- Consumer focus groups (face-to-face) and online survey

So how are communities using the information?
MARKETING PLAN

Planning

- What do new residents want in a community? Who is coming now and what brought them here?
- What potential new resident groups do we target? What community characteristics match up with these groups? Why are we a good match?
- What is our message and how do we reach them?
  a. Products – benefits to them
  b. Pricing – value & cost
  c. Promotion – methods to use
  d. Place – locational assets

Implementation

Control

Things we can’t do a lot about...

Competition
Legal/Political
Demographics
Technology
Culture
Physical Environment
Economy

What assets can we build on?

Things we CAN do something about:

Vision
Mission
Objectives & Marketing Goals
Strategies /actions
Culture

What assets can we build on?
Underwood, North Dakota

- Population 750
- 50 miles to Bismarck and Minot
- Energy mecca
Underwood Vision

“Underwood is a growing community, attractive to all who want to be part of a compassionate, caring and accepting place. We provide recreation and service for those who want to grow, prosper and retire in a place they can call home.

Underwood public school is the pride of the community. It provides world-class education and activities in a dynamic learning environment for youth and adults.

We are a diverse and vibrant business community that excels in quality and service from the perfect T-Bone steak to the best medical care. Resident and visitors alike can find it all in Underwood.

Our beautiful city has a proud history and a promising future.”
Underwood Bucks the Odds

2008

Today
Renovated Main Street Businesses

2008

Today
T-Bone Anyone

2008

Today
Not Just a Face Lift
Underwood in the News
What They Learned

Market:
• Family Friendly
• Affordable housing
• Lower cost of living
• Low taxes
• No traffic
• Population - 1,356
• Within 20 miles of Aberdeen
• Strong family ties to community
Of the 490 workers who live in Groton, 246 (50 %) are employed in Aberdeen.

Aberdeen (approx. 25,000 population) has 53 people employed in Groton.
Groton, SD: Industry in 2006

- Total number of establishments = 79 entities.
- Total number of employees in Groton = 471 people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Establishments by Employment-size class</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Estabs</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>49</td>
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What They *Learned*

Market:
- Opportunity to be closer to relatives
- An environment for raising children
- Quality school system
- Quality time with family/simpler pace of life
- Less congestion
Local discussion based on research

- *For example, why do you think newly hired professionals tend to leave Groton after one year?*
  - Informed discussion
  - Can pull in several research components
  - Issues that might have been buried
• Population - 6,282
• 200 miles from Denver, located on I-80
• Home of a national retail headquarters: 1,300 workers in Sidney - 400 more expected
What They Learned

Market:

• Higher paying job opportunities
• A job more in line with my skills
• Opportunity to spend more quality time with family/simpler pace of life
• Safe place to live
• Less congested place
Next Steps…

• Work closely with community councils
  – Input from the online and local focus groups
  – What are the priorities? First steps?
  – What can they realistically do?
  – Who needs to be involved?
  – What resources are needed?
Next Steps…

As a research team…

✓ Document process and share tools used (case study)

✓ Develop materials – Extension & non-Extension audience

✓ Possible eXtension contribution, publications, etc.
What WE Learned

• Timing is everything
  – Regular team meetings
  – Keep the momentum
  – Working as a group of 6 was not easy

• Community steering group make-up important

• Partnership (internal and external) critical

• Time and money, a special challenge for smaller communities

• Real give and take in a truly integrated res-ext project
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