

Beginning Alpaca Marketing Strategies

Part I –Setting Your Identity

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Marketing - some people love it, and some people hate it. However, whether you are on one side of the fence or the other, it is a necessary activity for any successful business. www.websters.com defines marketing as: *the commercial processes involved in promoting and selling and distributing a product or service*. Oh boy, I think that I am beginning to understand why people seem to shy away from marketing or are reluctant to embrace it as a way to help them succeed in their alpaca business. If marketing is so important, then how come it seems to be hidden behind a wall of complexity?

The first step in marketing our alpaca business was to define what our farm was and what it will provide to the industry and to our customers. Most owners have a good idea what they want to accomplish but may find it difficult to articulate that idea. This is the hardest part in the business development process because if your farm is defined too broadly then you can become stretched so thin that you will not have time to do everything well with the resources that you have available. If you define yourself too tightly then you may be missing out on a number of business opportunities and experiences. Each farm owner should sit down and seriously consider why they are getting into the alpaca business and what they want to get out of it. Ideally, we want to define what our farm is and what we provide in a couple of sentences. Less than that and people may not have a clear understanding of what you provide, more than that and you run the risk of people not remembering the critical points that you want to have come across. The term that you will hear most often in selling circles is “What is your elevator pitch?” This means that in the course of a normal elevator ride, let us say 20 seconds tell me who you are and what you do. It is a great exercise for one to better communicate who they are and why they are in the alpaca business. Practicing this elevator pitch will come in handy in the months to come as you attend alpaca shows, seminars, or even stand in line at the grocery store.

Don't aim for success if you want it; just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally. ~David Frost

Example:

Black Meadow Suris is a family owned farm located in Virginia providing high quality Suri alpacas that are known for their great genetics. We also have an informative alpaca education program and love working with new farms – anytime - anywhere.

In this short elevator pitch we communicated:

Who are we:	<i>Black Meadow Suris</i>
What are we:	<i>a family owned Suri alpaca farm</i>
Where are we:	<i>Fredericksburg, Virginia</i>
When will we do business:	<i>anytime – anywhere</i>
Why do we have a farm:	<i>to provide high quality Suri alpacas that are known for their great genetics; an informative alpaca education program; and the love of working with new farms</i>

With this basic information, (which we consider the cornerstone of any marketing program), we can better understand: *why we are in business?*

The next question to answer is: *to whom do we want to sell these products and services?* In using the same formula as above, we would come up with an elevator pitch to communicate this.

Example:

Black Meadow Suris sells high quality Suri alpaca and stud services for a profit targeting new farms with access to Virginia that prefer strong educational services and guidance on how to develop their Suri herd.

In this short elevator pitch we communicated:

Who do we sell to:	<i>All Suri farms but targeting new farms</i>
What do we sell:	<i>high quality Suri alpaca and stud services; educational services</i>
Where will we sell:	<i>farms with access to Virginia</i>
When will we do business:	<i>anytime - anywhere</i>
Why do we have a farm:	<i>for a profit</i>

The whole point of marketing is getting people to communicate their interest in buying something from you. In order for this to occur, they have to know at least some basic information like who you are and what you are selling. However, achieving these two objectives alone will not assist you unless the buyers also know how to contact you. Once you accomplish these three tasks then your marketing program will be a success and selling moves to the forefront. While we have better defined the first two objectives, marketing is all about communicating all three to your buyers. Communicating your identify is where we actually get into marketing strategies. For us, marketing strategies are broken down into two categories: **identification** and **communicating**. Not real technical terms to be sure but we think that these terms are descriptive. Identification has to be done before communicating because you have to decide on the messages

that you want to communicate before you communicate them. Identification began when the elevator pitch is created. Those simple beginning statements will soon become marketing vehicles.

Identification

Identification is simply identifying your farm with a name, logo, saying, or event so that it be remembered. We run into examples of this in everyday life. The car, shoes, coffee, soda, superstar, or website are examples that can be recalled by a logo or jingle. In branding an alpaca farm, there are a number of opportunities to create something that can be remembered. The trick is to not have so many different or conflicting messages out so that everyone gets confused with which one is the real you. I would stick with a picture (logo), web address/farm name, and tag line to start with. We can then take these basic building blocks and use them in a variety of ways to communicate with prospective customers.

Examples include:

Farm name Black Meadow Suris	Web Address www.blackmeadowsuris.com www.blackmeadowfarm.com	Logo 
Tag Line Suris – The Other Alpaca^(tm)		

Logo – It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words. A clever logo can get you recognized quicker than anything else. The downside to most logos is that while they are more easily recognized; they don't do much in the way of helping people communicate with you. So a logo should always be complemented with the farm name, phone number, or web address. In the years to come the logo may be able to stand alone so people that see the logo will remember the farm name, phone number or address but in the beginning you have to develop that link and association in people's minds.

Farm Name – Try to pick a farm name that helps to uniquely identify you and your farm. We personally stayed away from cutesy because it just wasn't us. If possible, select a name that helps others understand what you are and what you do. In the above example, the farm name communicates that we are involved with Suri alpacas. Don't be afraid to be creative and innovative in a farm name. Just remember that you and your farm name will be developing a long term relationship so make sure that you pick a name that you will not outgrow. I would also check to see if the farm is available as a web address.

Web Address - I would ensure that the farm name's web address is available on the internet since so many people use the internet as a way to research and explore. However, it would be pretty confusing to have someone remember your farm name and

then go to the internet and pull up another person's farm. The best web address is the exact spelling of the farm name. The more you deviate from the farm name in a web address, the easier it is for people to not remember or not associate it with you. In addition, many companies buy up not only their company name as a web address but other addresses that buyers could misspell if they were looking for that company. In the above example, we bought a second address (www.blackmeadowsuris.com) but regardless of which one is used, visitors go to the same website. It is a technology thing. Advertise one web address (the shortest) so that people will not get confused.

Tag Line – Tag lines are great for helping people remember your elevator pitch. Short, to the point, and catchy are critical. We tried a number of tag lines and spent many hours listing everyone that sounded good. It wasn't until we were at an alpaca show and someone asked me "how come your alpacas don't look like most of the other ones at the show?" I told her that mine were called Suris and that only about 5% of all alpacas worldwide were Suris. She said, "Oh, I got it Suris, the Other alpaca!" Bingo. .

As you can see in each of the examples, whether it is a logo, tag line, farm name or web address, we have tried to hold a consistent theme together – Suri Alpacas. The theme that you may want to address could just have easily been alpaca fiber processing, alpaca education or alpaca nutritional supplements. Whatever it may be, repeating the theme in different ways and combinations will help people remember you and your farm.

There is no point at which you can say, "Well, I'm successful now. I might as well take a nap." ~Carrie Fisher

After you have identified some or all of these messages, it is time to cast them out into the world for all to see.

About the Authors:

Renee and Barry Prokop have created and developed Black Meadow Suris to provide a diverse collection of suri alpacas. We have a passion for quality customer service and friendliness. Come experience the power that a small dedicated farm can bring to your breeding program! Services that we provide include long and short term agisting, breeding services, and alpaca sales. We also are opening two stores; one online and the other at the farm. Renee and Barry operate Black Meadow Suris just outside of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Fredericksburg is located in the rolling hills just below the falls of the Rappahannock River and halfway between the two Civil War capitals , Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA.



Renee, who is no stranger to the farm, will manage the day-to-day operations of Black Meadow Suris. Both Barry and Renee will continue to explore, learn, and communicate better ways that they have found to manage their growing farm.

To find out more about Black Meadow Suris, call us at 703-764-9077; email us at Renee@prokops.com or visit us on the web at www.blackmeadowsuris.com

