

Learn Agri-Food News

Reducing the Tuition in the School of Hard Knocks

Issue 2.9

November 2004

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Celebrate and Plan

What a year this group has had and what a great time to celebrate. Bring a neighbour to our December Open House. We 'll Showcase our businesses and learn from one another. Come to see and hear, or Come to tell and show. Either way, mark **Tuesday, December 14, 2004** on your calendar. As usual, we meet from **7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** We'll be in the meeting room at **Alexanders' Restaurant on the north east corner of the two highways at Rycroft.**

Agenda :

- Report and discussion on processor's equipment needs and possible solutions,
- Naming our group
- We have a new column in the **Peace Country Sun**—how shall we use it?
- Showcase practice for members
- Time to share challenges and solutions that might work.

Member Contacts

These entrepreneurs have given the editor permission to share their contact information for contacting one another (sharing rides to extend networking at meetings, exchanging information)

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A typical meeting—taste, smell, share ideas.

Great opportunities for sharing ideas and information.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting—
December 14, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Alexanders' Restaurant

Rycroft

It's free. We'll have cider and snacks, coffee and treats. It's a celebration and time for getting set for 2005

We Could Learn from This



Enhancing Customer Skills

Quick ? who gets priority when you're talking on the phone and a visitor walks in?

Answer - the visitor (who took the time to arrive in-person) should receive immediate acknowledgment. That means interrupting the caller. The quickest way to get the caller's attention is to say their name, "Pat, excuse me. Someone just walked in. May I put you on hold for a moment?" Then greet the visitor explaining that you're wrapping-up the call. Conclude the call and take care of the visitor.

Enhancing Telephone Skills



Often the customer's first impression of you and your organization is on the telephone. Ironically, this is an area where professional planning and training is often overlooked. Build a plan for answering and handling telephone calls.

Regrettably, for most of us this includes the use of answering machines and message systems. Here's your homework:

- Phone your own business number, listen critically to your answering machine message. Does it sound welcoming, professional and tell you (the customer) when a real person is available? Did you speak with enough clarity and slowness that people can hear your message?
- Try to leave a business message as if you were a customer. Was there enough time to talk? Were you satisfied? Did you get a useful reply and quickly? 😊

Last Meeting



We learned:

- three different meat producers are direct marketing their Peace raised bison (and other products) in Farmers' Markets in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver, respectively. (Kitt, Hegel, Hanson)
- The Grande Prairie Alberta Approved Farmers' Market is now open on Friday evening (to coincide with late opening by the other businesses) and Saturday each week. It's a busy place.
- Starbright Farm, Heather Porrill is back at it with her dry mixes. She brought samples of the chocolate chip cookies that were "to die for."
- Gertie Sorensen (Mini Creek Farms) brought her sister (and helper) to update us on the fabulous reception of lamb at the Grande Prairie Women's World Trade Show.
- From Rosewood Meadows, Dan talked about his chocolate manufacturing (the editor bought some fudge at the Farmers' Market and ... it was great!) and Linda discussed plans for the meat products
- Arnie (The Berry Basket) says he's 50% complete with his fruit leather dehydrator.



Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

you are welcome to any or all

**Tuesday,
December 14, 2004**

Alexander's
north east corner of
highways 2 and 49
at Rycroft

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting

Our (nearly) winter solstice meeting to celebrate and move to the next level of business:

1. Showcase your business or see those of others
2. Discuss equipment needs for small processors—we'll report on a project to help find equipment.
3. Help us brainstorm for meeting subjects and speakers
4. Start finding the information you need for the next stage of your own business—you'll be able to borrow from a traveling library of business books.

If you have belonged to the Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association, come for a supper meeting. We show up about 5:30 p.m., for a conversation to plan an annual meeting and discuss what to do next.

Just show up at 7:00 pm. A number of people* are car pooling to extend the time for casual conversation.

*See the Contact List on page 1 Tell Susan Meyer if you'd like your name on that list.



Would you like this course in the Peace? Call one of the people on the back page

A Repeat of last winter's Marketing Course. This is a six day course taken in one and two day sets. You'll create a marketing plan and some tools for your business and products.

January 11, 2005

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting

We're keeping an idea book. At each meeting we hear great things that people say they do and sometimes problems they've had and spent lots of time solving. What a resource we will have.

2007

Don't say you didn't hear about it early enough.  The Alberta Agriculture Direct Marketing Team tell us they have attracted the 2007 **North American Farm Direct Marketing Association Conference** to Alberta. Ask for a five year calendar for Christmas.



For Peace Region Ag Entrepreneurs, brought to you by:

The Working Group which includes: **Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:**



Bruce Rutley

Fairview

835-3959 or
1-866-835-5005

Dial 310-0000 to reach the following toll free:

Nicole McMullan

Alberta Economic Development

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Business Showcase

You are invited to **practice** showcasing your business—in a safe place. Bring one or more of the following to the December 14 evening and you'll receive a warm welcome:

- your business card
- your business profile (need help? call someone on the left of this column)
- a brochure
- a display
- some product to show or to let people sample
- a two minute talk on your idea
- some product to show or to let people sample

We'll give you:

- a bit of table space—3 feet or more depending on the crowd
- a chance to speak.



A HACCP Certificate from Jerry Kitt to Laurel Kirsch



Mini Creek Farms, Gerty Sorensen makes use of Lamb Association materials to promote her product

What's in a name?

Who are we, this group of Agri-Value Processors in the Peace who gather to learn from one another and from specialists related to our business learning needs?

The Learn Agri-Food Group? Network? The Peace Value Added Food & Ag Association?

Naming ourselves is as important as choosing any business name—including your own. We will discuss this on December 14. From the  Canada Business Service Centre here are some questions to consider:

- is the name appropriate for our chosen market?
- is the name short?
- is the name easy to remember?
- is the name distinctive?
- does it have the marketing message we want?



Information on the Net 

Canada Business Service Centre

http://www.cbcs.org/english/search/display.cfm?code=4006&Coll=FE_FEDSBIS_E

Enhancing Telephone Skills

<http://www.jeffmowatt.com/individual/telephoneskills.html>

Farm Direct Marketing:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/newslett.nsf/homemain/agpr?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/newslett.nsf/homemain/agpr?opendocument)