



Ottawa Valley Food Co-op Marketing Plan

Recommendations based on consultation
with OVFC producers and Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

Included in this report is a three-phase strategy for OVFC marketing. Each Phase can be rolled out over a period of time appropriate for OVFC (six months, one year, two years, etc). Each phase builds on the previous to position OVFC to grow membership and sales.

Phase I: Improve OVFC membership experience to increase sales

Phase II: Introduce the new and improved OVFC

Phase III: Retaining and building membership, and re-engaging producers

At each phase, it is recommended to set a goal for growing membership and sales. For example, 500 new members spending \$500 per year. In this way OVFC can use the marketing strategy to guide financial sustainability and tracks its success.

On a personal note, we would also like to say that we believe in the OVFC. The OVFC is the authentic Ottawa Valley—fresh products, from all over the valley, delivered to your area. It's the best of every farmers' market combined and year round. Members have convenient access to hard-to-find products like naturally-raised meat, artisan bread and year-round local vegetables. So we want to see people fill their cupboards, fridges and freezers with the OVFC.

Phase I: Improve OVFC membership experience to increase sales

Marketing is not just how you reach new customers, it's also how you keep existing customers engaged. Currently, members interact with the OVFC via the website and depots. These are the two key areas where OVFC marketing takes place. The website and food hubs are foundational to the OVFC's intent—an online marketplace with delivery hubs. The e-newsletters connect the online presence with the hub delivery.


NEW WEBSITE

The OVFC is an online marketplace.

It is the way you reach your members and where most of the contact happens between the OVFC and its members. So this is the most important part of your business model and one of the most key places to do marketing. The website needs to be easy to navigate, highly visual and enjoyable to use. Members must be able to pay online. This needs to be understood as a new marketing strategy in and of itself.

A marketing plan must have a customer retention strategy.

It should consider all the ways the OVFC reaches customers and what messages are being sent to them regarding their importance. A successful customer retention strategy gets customers to buy from you more often. Ways to roll out this strategy include customer appreciation content in newsletters and loyalty programs.



The existing OVFC website has fallen behind in terms of contemporary websites standards. Visually and functionally, it is ready for a complete overhaul.

As noted initially, the Ottawa Valley Food Co-op is an online marketplace. Everything stems from the website—therefore it is essential to incorporate more modern features and trends in website development.

Images on a new website

Producer images: Producers are required to supply photos that more accurately and appealingly depict the products. Create a tip sheet for them or find one online. For ground beef, a main photo of a pound of beef in the butcher paper.

On producer pages, image galleries can be created that depict the farm, products being grown, cattle in the field and most importantly, great photos of the producers. Use images to convey the story of the producers. Every image needs to have a caption. Only two or three paragraphs of text are required per producer. Keep it simple. Keep it visual.

Ordering system images: A more visual/graphic system for depicting the ordering cycle. For example, a picture of volunteers smiling as they hand consumers their orders.

Feature products: On the homepage, visually feature a product and link to a page with more details. Change the homepage monthly.

E-commerce

Stock/inventory management: Through modern e-commerce systems, inventory management is fairly easy. Implementing online stock management may make it possible to eliminate the current ordering-cycle system and allow users to order anytime. This is far more convenient for members and likely to encourage orders. The only date members will need to know is the delivery date.

Product reviews: Allow members to review products.


Related products: Each product page can have a *You might like...* heading with related products displayed. Encourages more purchases.

Shopping cart system: Needs to be easy for members to update/change/readily accessible.

Categorize products: Develop categories for products and allow users to search by the categories. For example, beets could go under the categories of vegetables, make a salad and in-season now. Whereas potatoes could go under categories such as vegetables, make a salad and long-term storage. Jams and jellies could be categorized by fruit-based, condiments, great gifts and preserves. New products can be categorized as such as well.

Integrations

A new website should be integrated with various other media: e-newsletter sign-up (for non-members, members are automatically signed up), social



media live feed (showing all recent Facebook posts at a glance without leaving the website), and social media share buttons (to publicly share a specific page of the website). Share buttons are different from the standard social media buttons which simply sign you up to see future posts.

General content

Existing site navigation is great and can be reincorporated into a new site.

home | who we are | community resources | shop now
Join | Shop | Pick-up

Front and centre for general content should be the **products for sale**.

Producer pages need to be edited (less text) and images need to be added. Contact information for the producers should be at the bottom of the text.

Recipes need to have photos. Producers should be associated with ingredients involved in the various recipes.

Alternatively... improve the existing website

Add a Paypal check-out to the existing website. To offset the cost, note to members that paying using their credit card will add 3% to their final total.

Investigate if you can set up Paypal so that the member pays the fee, instead of the Paypal account-holder (OVFC).

Producers are required to supply photos that more accurately and appealingly depict the products. For ground beef, a main photo of a pound of beef in the butcher paper.

OVFC DEPOTS

Drop-off locations are the second main way to interact directly with members. Continue the initiative to partner with local food hubs as OVFC depots. This will make it possible to have all-day pick up and increase business for OVFC and local food hub partners. Pick up locations should be pleasant, relaxed environments. All interactions at depots count as marketing too.

Tell members now that the OVFC has already begun to change delivery days in response to member feedback. Work this into social media and newsletters over the coming months.

Each food depot would have an OVFC delivery pick-up sign with the OVFC website and pick-up time printed and visible to the public. The food hub partner should be able to give information to prospective members (pamphlets, etc.) for how and where to sign up. Where an OVFC depot is not yet possible, each OVFC delivery vehicle will have a magnetic sign/logo so members can readily identify the pick-up location.

Each OVFC delivery order would come in an attractive package (box, bag, basket?) with the OVFC logo. Producers are encouraged to make their own packaging as attractive as possible and include their own promotional material.

The distribution strategy is a part of a marketing plan. In this case, there is only one method of distribution. Using it as a marketing opportunity is critical. Aesthetics matter as do all the interactions customers have when they pick up their order.

In an elevator pitch, describe your business in just a few sentences and in such a way that the listener is intrigued and wants to get involved. It emphasizes the specific benefits to customers or your business's "unique selling proposition." To inspire people to buy from you, you must know what makes you different from other businesses and talk about it.



All volunteers should know the OVFC's elevator pitch—**Authentic Ottawa Valley—fresh products, from all over the county, delivered to your area.** It's the best of every farmers' market combined and year-round—access to hard-to-find products, like naturally-raised meat, artisan bread and year-round local vegetables.

E-NEWSLETTERS

The regular e-newsletters are an additional and valuable way that the OVFC interacts with the membership. The OVFC will have to figure out whether the newsletter will be separate from the announcement about the beginning of the ordering cycle or part of the same email.

Start maximizing the potential of the e-newsletter content to foster membership loyalty. Improve e-newsletters with more photos, less text and drive readers to the website to “read more.”


The e-newsletters are the main venue for the OVFC to make a personal, direct connection to members. Create content that makes the viewers want to share it. Go beyond simply announcing the start of a new ordering cycle—use the e-newsletters as an opportunity to put a face on the OVFC. E-newsletters should be set up to drive members to the OVFC website and make purchases.

This can be done by featuring one of the following, in addition to an administrative announcement:

- » Producer profiles created through the OVFC marketing budget. Include an image of the producer/and their products. Most of all, tell the story of the producer. Don't put all of this in the e-newsletter. Put it on the website and link the e-newsletter with a “read more” to the page on the website.
- » Feature volunteers. Is there a product people especially love in their area? What do they love about the OVFC?
- » By incorporating the people involved into the e-newsletters, the OVFC will personalize the co-operative. People love faces. We all love looking at faces. Images of food are lovely, but they are impersonal. We want to know people's stories. When we buy their products, we want to feel connected and know their story so we can share it with others. This, of course, leads to increased word-of-mouth.
- » Feature a new product. Have a great image of the product(s), a short summary and a “read more” that links to the website.
- » Include an educational feature (i.e. a link to an online article explaining why organizations like the OVFC can't sell chicken, eggs or dairy), share exciting local food news (from around North America) or provide a recipe.
- » Always include social media share icons/links. Ask members to forward the e-newsletter to their email contacts, or share it on social media, and explain the positive impacts that come from members spreading the word about the OVFC.

Further to this, ensure that for Gmail users, OVFC e-newsletters land in their *primary* tab instead of their *promotions* tab. Here's how:

- » Keep your subscribers engaged to maintain high open and click through rates.

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- » Ask subscribers to add your From email address to their Gmail contacts list.
 - » Ask subscribers to move your messages to the Primary inbox. This is the most effective way to teach Gmail to deliver future messages to the Primary tab.

Non-members should be able to receive e-newsletters too. It's strongly advised that the OVFC create an e-newsletter sign-up form for the website and add sign-up modules to OVFC social media pages.

Phase II: Introduce the new and improved OVFC

A NEW-AND-IMPROVED CAMPAIGN

Develop a *new-and-improved* print/social media/web/e-newsletter campaign to re-engage old members and sign-up new members. Campaign to highlight OVFC features and each features' corresponding benefits for members. All marketing should now have the same look and tone.

Print Media

Rack cards/postcards: Increase effectiveness of postcards by using great images of producers themselves. Rack cards are an inexpensive and effective way to brand the OVFC.

Print ads: Locally-owned newspapers are popular and widely read. Don't underestimate their value and don't forget that they're local too. Don't necessarily expect direct sales from ads—they are another branding tool.

Explore print ad rates in publications that target member interests. For example, contact *Edible Ottawa* and ask for their advertising package.

Make print ads specific: For example, promote an incentive package... Become an OVFC and order our summer barbeque package—local meat, condiments and buns. Or promote an upcoming event. Consider doing a general drive for new members... place an ad specifically outlining member benefits and the cost.

Stay on topic with ads: Avoid the temptation to want to tell readers everything about the OVFC in one ad. Less text. More visual. Drive people to the website.

Press releases: Local papers are more willing to support you when you occasionally place ads with them. Send well written, print-ready press releases, written in a journalistic style (third person with quotes) with two or three high resolution good photos. If the press release is well written, it's more likely to find its way into the paper.

Create and maintain a press database with contact names, numbers and emails: Be sure to include Ottawa based media as well. Why not send press releases to each paper all at once. Many newspapers have an online system for sending press releases. Become familiar with this system and use it.

NEW INCENTIVES AND PACKAGES

Incentive Examples

Member Dollar Value Coupons

Member spends \$500 in one year and the next year receives a \$25 coupon from the OVFC. Send in dollars, not in percentage off. Receiving “money” feels as if it has more value. Which sounds better? Getting 5% off or getting a coupon for \$25?

Sell Gift Certificates to Members

Create a campaign for members to buy OVFC memberships as Christmas gifts, or any time of year. Also make gift cards to give to people who are already members.

Seasonal Packages

Gather three or four producer products into seasonal packages. For example: 1) summer barbeque package includes burgers, buns, condiments. 2) Christmas “what to buy for mom” package puts together soaps, potpourri sachets, jar of jam. 3) Thanksgiving dinner ready-to-go package includes everything but the turkey (bread, cranberry sauce, salad, coleslaw, root vegetables).

Fill-Your-Freezer Campaign

Create a campaign to encourage members to fill their freezers. Highlight all the freezer-friendly producer products. Promote the benefit of having tomorrow’s healthy, local dinner one overnight-thaw away. Usually easy dinners mean processed, imported food but with the help of the OVFC, quick meals can be 100% healthy and local. This marketing would appeal to multiple Customer Profiles.

T-shirts and Bumper Stickers

These should be products for sale by the OVFC or used as incentives to order over \$100, for example. Engage local artists to donate an ink drawing to be used on a t-shirt with the benefit being that the local artist is promoted on the product-purchase page. Black ink drawings are cost-effective for t-shirt reproduction as they are one-ink only (as opposed to multiple colours which greatly increases t-shirt expense).

Bumper stickers need to be created and for sale on the website as well as used liberally as give-aways in product pick-up boxes. It’s a simple, cost-effective way to get the brand in people’s brains all over the valley. The slogan and design should be really clever and appealing so take your time and crowdsource ideas until you have a shortlist that members can vote on. The creation of the bumper sticker is a marketing activity that could generate engagement for months and shed light on how members want to see their co-op represented visually. Unlike T-shirts, bumper stickers are seen every time you drive anywhere.

Producer Bingo

Branded bingo sheets could be circulated to all members for their fridges (or they can print them themselves). Each square features a different producer. Every time they order from a producer they cross it off. When they get a

Special offers are a critical part of any marketing plan. Examples include free trials, money back guarantees, packages and discounts. The research shows that special offers lead to increased sales. Try a range of special offers, promote them in at least three different ways (i.e. print, e-newsletter and social media) and evaluate which is most successful with your customers.

Strategies for increasing transaction prices, such as packages, are another key component of the Marketing Plan. You don’t want people to buy just one product; there’s needs to be an incentive for them to buy more. Aside from packages, you can increase transaction prices by suggesting complementary products or giving a bonus once they’ve spend a certain amount.

bingo, they ideally let the OVFC know via Facebook and they win a prize. This could be a fun way to keep people engaged on social media.

Standing Orders

Consider developing a standing-order system. Members select the products they want to receive every month and paid for the year in advance. Since not every producers' products are always available, create a category for products that are always available so that members know they can create their own standing order from these particular products.

ROLL OUT A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Rather than viewing social media as a strategy unto itself, view it as a way to support all the other marketing activities. Create a consistent presence that's ever more interactive. Use the analytics built into Facebook to determine what content your audience loves. Invite people to share and comment in at least 1/3 of your posts.

Understanding Facebook

Facebook is currently the only social media platform used by the OVFC. However, Facebook has changed and it no longer necessarily shows business or community page posts to everyone who has *liked* the page. Firstly, this is because they want to encourage you to buy ads. Secondly, it's because they only want to show people engaging content. So, we must be engaging on Facebook if we want our posts to show up in people's timelines. Do this by being witty, sharing viral content (often images with witty captions) and asking questions that people can't resist answering. Once you've proved to Facebook that people like your content, through likes, shares and comments, then Facebook will show your posts to more people.

Using Facebook

Some people are naturals on Facebook. Their tone, diction and choice of content resonate. Consider getting someone who knows and loves Facebook to help write your posts or just give that person access to your account and assign them certain days of the week to post. You'll want to post daily but not more than once. If you post similar content at different times of day, notice how interaction differs and adjust future posts accordingly. Also, consider posting your best content on the weekend, as that's when people spend the most time on Facebook.

The best social media accounts are full of personality; they're quirky and compelling. While you need to appeal to OVFC member values, and represent the brand of the OVFC you still have some latitude to create a unique character to lead the local food conversation. Avoid predictability.

Check out how Lanark Local Flavour uses Facebook. It's an excellent mix of content.

Use Facebook as a public space for *the* conversation about local food in the Valley. You can tag other local health organizations in posts that they'd appreciate reading. The mantra is: provide value. If people or organizations consistently get great information, tips or laughs from your content then

A promotions strategy answers the question: How will you reach new customers?

Strategies may include ads, trade shows, print media, online and events marketing. First, ensure you understand your Target Customers, your Unique Selling Proposition and develop a logo, tagline and tone that will be consistent throughout all your Promotions. Make sure all promotions work synergistically. For example, anything you're doing in the physical world needs to be shared online before, during and after. Also, if you're successful with getting online media attention be sure to share it via social media and possibly newsletters.

Social media can't be ignored or underestimated in marketing plans today.

However, it does not replace other marketing activities; rather, it must dovetail with them. Use social media to talk about all public activity of the OVFC, in some cases, before, during and after. The main point to remember is that social media is social; unlike other media it's designed to be interactive. Using Facebook as a soapbox to shout out your message is a surefire way to get ignored. Ask for input, crowdsource responses (i.e. favourite way to eat garlic scapes) or give credit to other community groups or businesses (and tag them).

you're on your way to creating an authentic, vibrant online community (the holy grail for social media managers).

Many new businesses build their social media following by running contests where they enter your name in a draw every time you share their posts. This is a great way to build your audience and build engagement simultaneously.

Standing out on social media

Consider creating a character that represents the OVFC on social media, like a mascot. A stuffed barnyard animal, for example, could be introduced as the expert in all things Ottawa Valley food. Take a picture of it at the computer with the OVFC Facebook page open. There would be major announcement that this *volunteer* is now running the social media. The character could be developed and funny pictures could be taken of it all over the Valley, singing the producers' praises. Have it play on local stereotypes, joke about the weather, refer to local legends or otherwise draw out local storylines. Sometimes a funny character gets away with saying silly, but engaging, things that we couldn't. Have a team of enthusiastic, human volunteers helping this character stay consistent and engaging. Bring the stuffed animal to delivery day to boost morale and to OVFC info booths to attract fans. If it catches on, the story and the pictures can get more and more elaborate.

Homespin has created a guide to using social media and it's available as a free download on our website.

Delegating social media

Use the points below to write a Social Media Manager job description whether it be for contract workers, staff or volunteers. This way it's clear what the OVFC is expecting to accomplish through its investment of time on social media. If the job is split between several people ensure the division of responsibilities is clear and the communication is consistent. The following steps will help your social media manager work towards a social media strategy.

Steps to launching or re-launching your social media presence

- » **Set social media goals.** Do you want to engage community partners, customers or both? Each week how many page likes, post likes, content shares and comments do you want? Or, do you want to measure your success by increased website traffic, more orders, more people signing up? Facebook will tell you, when you link to the website, how many people actually click through to it.
- » **Create an editorial calendar to ensure you're sharing a consistent mix of content.** The social media rule of thirds suggests you should post: 1/3 about your special offers or announcements, 1/3 to give credit to other organizations, people or projects that your audience cares about and 1/3 to ask questions or make requests of your audience. Use a program such as Hootsuite to schedule a month of posts in one afternoon. This means you can take the weekend off and your online presence will still be rocking.

- » **Begin drafting posts and compiling content that will reinforce the OVFC value proposition or unique selling position.** Always use great pictures. Drive people to the website. This work is ongoing.
- » **You may know your customer profiles but get to know who you're actually speaking to online.** Be aware that your audience will be different on each social network. Know the values of your audience and speak to those values, i.e. community and creativity not individualism or competitiveness.
- » **Make sure you're on the right social networks** (Twitter and Instagram would be great additions for you)
- » **Listen, listen, listen to what your followers, project partners and competitors talk about.** As the OVFC, not as an individual, *like* other food-related organizations or other Ottawa Valley health-related, entrepreneur-related organizations on Facebook. Then you'll be able to see a newsfeed that is tailored just for the OVFC. You can engage with their content, all in one place, and they'll see that you're listening.
- » **Craft impactful, targeted messaging.** Stay on brand with a consistent tone and aesthetic. Be helpful. Be witty.
- » **Converse in an authentic way.** Ask questions. Incite discussions. Respond to other organizations' or businesses' questions. Create guidelines for comments on your page so you have a policy to refer to if need be.
- » **Regularly evaluate your success.** What posts garnered the most attention? Gather more content like them. Notice what posts, yours and others, do best on different social media. What posts successfully drive people to your website? Facebook gives you this information so make use of it.

Social media integration

Put a live feed of Facebook (or Twitter, if you get it) posts on the website. This shows people at a glance how current and interactive the OVFC is. It's also a great way to keep the website feeling fresh without doing extra work.

Social media share icons should appear on every page of the website so that each specific page can be shared as a distinct piece of content to the social media of choice. Write engaging titles or captions for each webpage, not just descriptive ones. There should also be a share via email button for each page.

Involving producers and customers

Determine which producers have Facebook pages for their businesses. Highlight these pages (one or two each week) on the OVFC page. In turn, producers should be invited to:

- » Like the OVFC page
- » Routinely mention the OVFC or share OVFC posts
- » Invite friends to like the OVFC page
- » Like other producers' pages and invite their friends to do the same
- » Share other producers' posts

What's described at left counts as a referral strategy, which is another component of the marketing plan.

A referral strategy ensures people are referring new customers to the OVFC. In this case we've covered how to ensure producers are sharing information about the OVFC online but the strategy shouldn't be limited to producers or online. Could there be incentives for members to sign up other members or getting inactive members to become active again? What other community groups could be asked to refer people to the OVFC? Oftentimes it's amazing what can come of a simple ask. This can be very inexpensive and powerful because people are more likely to heed the recommendations of people and organizations that they already like and trust.

Repeatedly invite producers to take all the above actions using different wording, rationales or incentives. If producers don't have business pages on Facebook but they do have personal Facebook profiles they can still do all the above, as can consumer members.

Twitter

Ask producers if they'd like to be represented if a Twitter account was created. They'd be required to supply regular content about their business, including photos, product updates and links to their web presence. On Twitter, you can post many times a day so every day you could feature a producer (use the same link every time with a different caption), share local food news (simply retweet others' content) and share a fun local food related meme (endless stock of them via Pinterest or Google images). Drive people to the OVFC website from Twitter several times each week too. Having great looking producer profiles on the OVFC site means you can drive them there instead of sending your audience to the producers' own websites. This is why blogs are called content marketing; you go to someone's website because there's always new, helpful content. A well designed website keeps people there for a while, clicking through a series of pages and eventually signing up or buying from you.

Phase III: Retaining and building membership, and re-engaging producers

Learn more about existing members

Eventually, the OVFC will have to dedicate time to creating customer profiles (the demographic groupings of its existing customers) with detailed descriptions, in order of their importance, and with recommendations on how to reach each one.

We recommend bringing together your marketing enthusiasts (twice annually) to create a marketing strategy with goals, budget, timeline, a series of actions that build on and support each other and plans for evaluation. Each monthly meeting should include a report on what marketing actions have been taken and what the results have been.

On-going marketing activities

Re-engage producers by showing them that the OVFC sees itself as a business poised to grow rather than a community project maintaining itself. The producers sell through lots of avenues and if the OVFC is not marketing strategically and successfully on their behalf then producer affection for, and confidence in, the OVFC will wane. Producers are disenchanted so offer them more before asking them to do more. Company culture and morale cannot be underestimated in building a successful business.

Homespin suggests that future employees have team-building skills and experience with crafting successful marketing campaigns. These skills may be as important for building the OVFC into a viable business as knowledge of local food issues.

A marketing plan should begin with identifying target customers.

We're including it here because it may be time-consuming and the OVFC has to be prepared to act on the information once it's been compiled. The OVFC already has groupings of customers (that are vaguely understood) and for each grouping a profile can be created that includes: age, gender, income and interests as well as wants and needs as they relate to the OVFC.

For example: Busy parent, mid-thirties with two kids. Two decent incomes in the household, interested in children's activities, healthy lifestyle, being outdoors. Wants fresh, local food but needs it to be extremely easy to access. They don't have time to volunteer and their consumer decisions are often influenced by others in their own demographic. It matters if it's a cool or trendy thing to be a part of.

A marketing plan includes joint ventures.

The OVFC already has a track record of collaborating with RCCFDF, RCDSB, health organizations, environmental non-profits and many other community organizations. Without planning a big event or new program these connections can still be leveraged continually for easy wins like cross-promotion online. With joint ventures the possibilities are endless.

- » Campaign to highlight local producers so that members can continually become more familiar with where their food is coming from.
- » Continue to develop new incentives and packages (see list above)
- » Build on partnerships with community institutions: schools, hospitals, etc. (for both promotion and distribution purposes)

TRAIN VOLUNTEERS, BOARD AND PRODUCERS TO BE POWERFUL AMBASSADORS

Large companies have whole departments devoted to sales, which is very different than marketing. Since the OVFC doesn't have a sales department, and we want to increase sales, all volunteers, board members and producers can be trained to talk about the OVFC in a compelling way. We can talk about the products or producers we love or share others' testimonials.

All training for OVFC volunteers should include the elevator pitch, the unique selling proposition and being informed on current promotions or incentives. Further to that, there could be training in sales.

INCREASE GENERAL WORD-OF-MOUTH

- » #1 way to increase WOM is "have you heard that there's been revamp at the food co-op?"
- » Get people talking about the producers by making their stories and images accessible.
- » Create small, inexpensive flyers to promote new items/new producers/new incentives and include these flyers as notices in delivery boxes.
- » Develop/distribute press releases frequently.

LOGO REDEVELOPMENT

Consider creating a new logo. Have horizontal and vertical versions available for various formats as well as black and white line art, grayscale, spot colour and cmyk colour versions.

Work towards creating a logo that represents the creative, unique nature of people who move here to produce and sell food... and represents the people who are wanting to partake of that food. The existing logo is strongly linear and conservative. It's great that it's simple but it lacks impact.

INTERNSHIP POSITIONS AT OVFC

This is contingent upon having a paid or volunteer supervisor who is comfortable managing people and who is relatively tech savvy. The OVFC could advertise unpaid internships and target retired, tech savvy members. Contrary to the stereotypes, there are plenty of technophilic seniors out there. Alternatively this work could be paid through a grant that covers half the intern's wage. If the intern is being paid then they should have a background in journalism, marketing or photography. Interns should be familiar with the overall Marketing Strategies underway at the OVFC and understand how their work fits into it. They should also have a firm understanding of the OVFC brand so the tone and aesthetic of their work is in keeping with other marketing.

The conversion strategy is the part of the marketing plan where you plan how you will turn prospective customers into paying customers. All the following are tested ways to *enroll* people or get them to buy from you: paint a picture of their problem solved, make them a promise (i.e. you won't find such a large selection of quality meats anywhere else), describe the customer profile (which is them), describe the tangible results for their household, explain what are they saving (time and money), share testimonials from others like them, create bonuses that make them want the product just for that (ie fun at delivery day?), brainstorm what their objections may be and have responses ready, remove all risks and create guarantees.

Writing and photography internships

Several interns could visit producers, take pictures, get sound bites on video, or just gather quotes or succinct explanations of “why producers do what they do”. Writing brief, compelling descriptions of the producers would build an invaluable cache of content for social media sharing and e-newsletters.

The quality of the volunteers’ work may vary so let them know at the outset that their work is being collected for possible use at a future date i.e. for a database of materials to use for marketing. Then, the person overseeing the marketing can choose if and when they use the photos and writing that interns submit. The volunteers could possibly be allowed to share sneak previews on their personal social media accounts or with their email contacts.

Instagram internship

One internship position could solely revolve around building an Instagram following by taking great photos and connecting with every other foodie in the valley. Foodies abound on Instagram! This position should be filled by someone with a proven track record with photography and social media. Remember, any Instagram post can automatically go to Facebook and Twitter, saving you the trouble of creating unique posts for each platform.

Twitter internship

Another internship could be managing Twitter. The local food movement is a huge conversation there so it’s a great place to get news and stories to share on other social media. It’s also a great place to learn about innovative marketing ideas for local food. This could increase B2B opportunities for OVFC producers. Many Ottawa and Ottawa Valley food businesses are networking on Twitter. It is better used as a place for networking, rather than reaching customers directly. For the intern to refer to, provide examples of other local food organizations doing an exemplary job of building an online community via Twitter.

Here’s an example of another food co-op that’s created volunteer marketing positions. <http://kitsapfood.coop/we-need-you/marketing-committee/>



Implementation of new strategies

In conclusion, Homespın suggests the OVFC focus on the following marketing activities.

Create an annual schedule for e-newsletters. Outline month by month what each e-newsletter is going to promote. Allow space for new producers who will be introduced over the course of a year.

Design incentive packages or special offers, choose one to start with as an experiment. Allow six months lead time for launch. Sketch out how the package will come together. Will it have custom packaging? Will it be easy to carry? List critical questions, such as: Quantity per package? Each package will feed x-number of people? How will it be assembled?

Develop a new website with a focus on sales via great product images, display of related products and a payment gateway. Include integration with social media and e-newsletter sign-up.

Start interacting with community groups, producers and customers on social media. Simply posting is not enough. Take advantage of tools that allow you to schedule weeks of posts in an afternoon so as to reduce staff/volunteer time.

Invite producers and consumers to do the five things listed under *Engaging Producers and Consumers*. Producers also need guidelines for how to take and submit great photos of their products.

