



Marketing Your Aquaponic Products

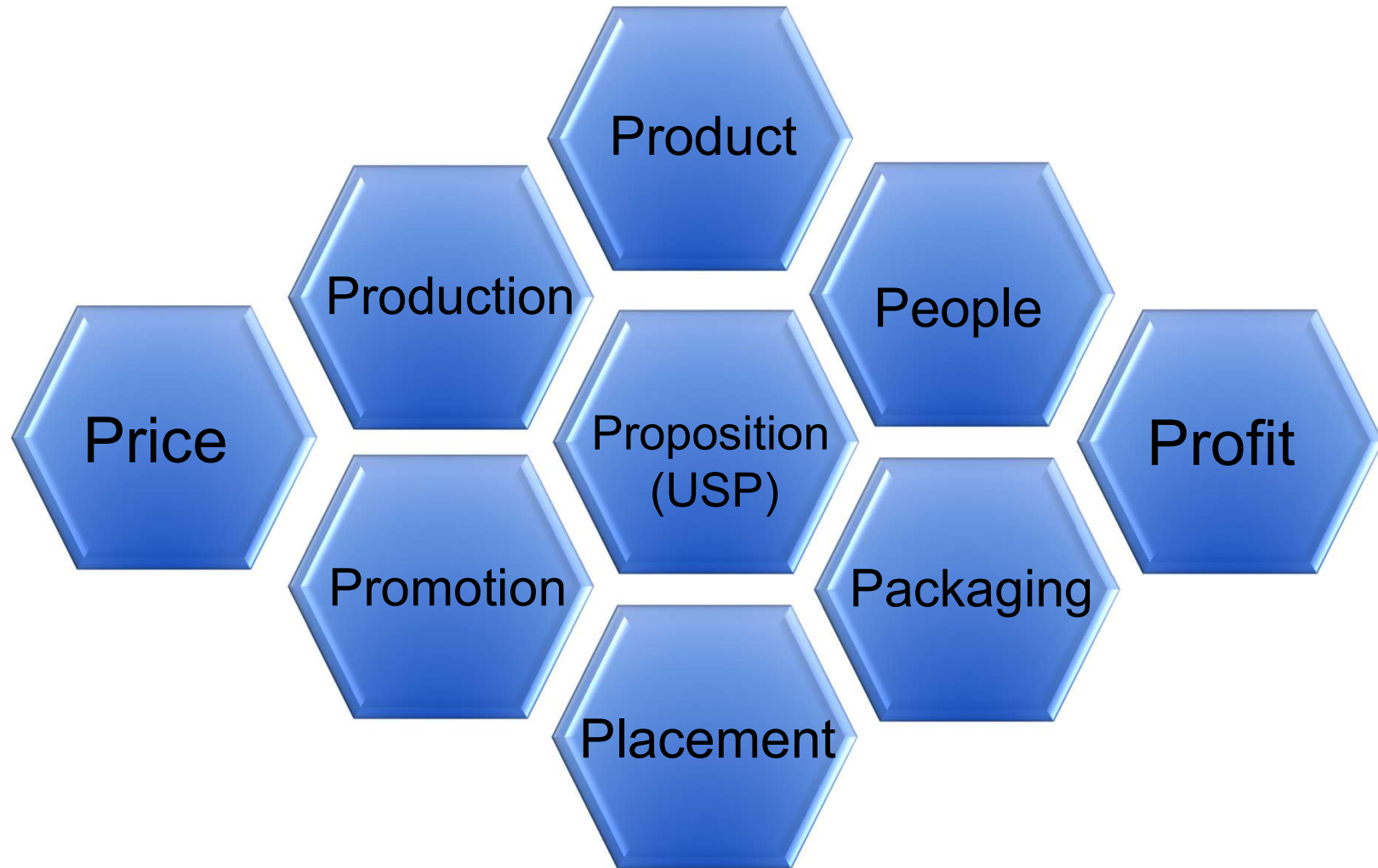




Aquaponic Farming Business

- A hobby system and backyard aquaponics are very different than aquaponic farming
- Selling your food means you need to maintain professional industry standards for food safety
- A business requires interactions with banks, insurance, customers and the government
- Don't believe everything on the internet!

The Ps of Marketing





Products and Services

What are you going to sell?

- Produce – Greens, herbs, microgreens, vegetables, fruits, root crops
- Fish – tilapia, bass, catfish, koi, fingerlings, others...
- Components – system kits, parts, supplies
- Edutainment – Tours and trainings
- Sustainability – selling the idea of local food, green jobs, skills training, self-reliance, nutrition, food access
- Events – farm to table dinners, farmer for a day
- Byproducts –system water, fish fertilizer, fish leather





Aquaponics Ambassador Program

- *Dropship or commission based sales opportunities*
- *Training partnership and revenue share*







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Fantastic Fish Products?



Tilapia skin being tested for treating burn victims



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Production

What can you produce with volume and quality?

- You can't sell what you can't grow
- You can't always sell what you did grow
- Grow for the chefs and specialty markets, but don't bank on it
- Production factors – light, temps, season
- Grow to fit your goals
- Create and revise your production plan



Production Planning

General Planting and Sales Timetable

	Mth 1				Mth 2				Mth 3				Mth 4				Mth 5			
	wk1	wk2	wk3	wk4	wk1	wk2	wk3	wk4	wk1	wk2	wk3	wk4	wk1	wk2	wk3	wk4	wk1	wk2	wk3	wk4
First Seed Starts	█				█				█				█				█			
Second Seed Starts		█				█				█				█				█		
Third Seed Starts			█				█				█				█				█	
Fourth Seed Starts				█				█				█				█				█
First Transplant				█				█				█				█				█
Second Transplant					█						█				█				█	
Third Transplant						█					█				█				█	
Fourth Transplant							█				█				█				█	
First Harvest								█				█				█				
Second Harvest									█				█				█			
Third Harvest										█				█				█		
Fourth Harvest											█				█				█	
First QA										█										
Second QA											█									
Third QA												█								
Fourth QA													█							
First Partial Delivery													█							
Second Partial Delivery														█						
Third Partial Delivery															█					
Fourth Partial Delivery																█				
Customer Payments (net30)																	█			
																		█		
																			█	
																				█

Planting for Profit – Not Production

**30 rafts per week harvested
in 5 week turns**

- 24ct head lettuce at \$1.75/ea = \$1260/wk, **\$65,000/yr**
- 18ct head lettuce is \$945/wk, **\$50,000/yr**



**50 rafts per week harvested
in 3 week turns**

- Arugula, mache, mixed salad greens, mizuna
- 1 lb per raft, at \$5lb = **\$250/wk or \$13,000/yr**



Planting for Profit – Not Production

Pea tendrils and baby peas

Very temp. sensitive,
4'x8' space

\$150/4 months, \$300/yr



Pea shoot microgreens

16 flats in 4'x8' space

2 weeks from seed to delivery

\$144/wk, \$7488/yr





Price

What is the “market” willing to pay?

- Create a scale of pricing based on customer and placement
- Packaging will make a difference in “value”
- Customer expectations and acceptance
- Consider the time/price trade off
- Know that prices will vary with the market

Pricing examples

- 24 ct case of lettuce - \$36 - \$42
- Loose leaf by the pound - \$3 - \$9/lb
- Individual heads - \$1 - \$4
- Bunches - \$1 - \$4
- Microgreens - \$10 - \$25 per flat
- Flowers - \$.10 - \$1.50
- Tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers – each or by the pound
- Tilapia and catfish - \$5 - \$7 live, bass \$10 - \$12, koi - \$40+





Promotion

How will you connect to your customer?

- In person – farmers markets, personal delivery
- Tours – customers visit the farm, speaking, teaching
- Memberships – CSA shares, salad subscription
- Social media – facebook, Instagram, twitter, blogs
- Website – products, contact, posts, ordering
- Offers – coupons, recipes, ads





People

Who will want to buy your product?

- Chefs
- Parents
- Market goers
- Teachers
- Distributors
- Industry leaders
- People that care about their food







Proposition (USP)

What is your unique selling proposition?

- What is your “story”?
- Why does it matter to people?
- Why should people buy your product?
- How is it different, better?
- What are the benefits?







Placement

Where will people find your product?

- Farmers Markets
- Restaurants, private clubs
- CSA membership drop off points
- Grocery stores, markets
- Schools, hospitals, institutions
- Events, catering companies
- Local food purchasing website
- Zoos, aquariums, other farms













Packaging

How will you package your product?

- Different people need/want different packaging
- How will you maintain “quality”
- How will you project “value”
- How will you tell your story
- How will it be food safe



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Profit

What keeps your farm running?

- How can you keep costs low and production high
- You don't make money growing a crop, only selling a crop
- Have a polyculture of profit opportunities
- Plant for profit not production
- There are other “profits” to reap from aquaponics

Hydroponics vs Aquaponics Comparison

Using Espartan as nutrients (organic hydroponics)

- About \$200/20L
- Use 20L/2wks
- Total cost for nutrients \$480/m or **\$5700/yr**
- No added income
- *All other system components being equal*

Using fish and fish feed

- 4lbs feed/day, \$1/lb
\$120/m, \$1460/yr
- 300 fingerling every 8wks at \$.50/ea, \$900 fish/yr
- Total cost of fish and feed
\$1460 + \$900 = **\$2400/yr**

- Added income \$8000
(1600 fish x \$5/each)
- **Profit \$8000 – \$2400 = \$5600**



Polyculture of Revenue

- Plant production
- Farm food boxes
- Fish production
- Tours, field trips
- Training classes
- System, supplies & component sales
- Grants, donations
- Local installations and support
- Agrotourism
- Paid internships
- Events and space rentals
- Farm to table meals
- Compost
- Fish fertilizer
- Other business opportunities



Work on profit from the start

- Pick a few specific crops that will work in your climate and focus on them (easier to grow, market, package, etc)
- Focus on crops that you have an established demand for
- Maximize growing space, crop rotation is critical
- Only keep plants and fish that can pay for themselves
- Consider where to delegate work efforts
- Check the “costs” of different products & price points etc.
- R&D is wonderful, but it is hard to make it pay
- Don’t quit your “day” job, consider hiring a farm assistant
- Have a “growth” plan, don’t try to do everything at once



Profit = Revenue - Expenses

You can make more money by increasing revenue.

You can also make more money by lowering expenses.

How will you keep expenses low?

- Work with suppliers, buy in bulk
- Manage utility costs, don't over consume anything
- If using lights consider a light mover and correct coverage
- Consider renting space instead of building a greenhouse
- Interns can help offset labor costs *(but you also get what you pay for)*
- Consider renting a delivery van instead of buying one

Profit Preserves Passion

You must be able to sustain your farm

