Know thy Customer

The Leslieville Farmers’ Market Research Project
A little about our Market...

Toronto’s East End in Jonathan Ashbridges Park

Incorporated non-profit, stand-alone community market.

45 vendors (25 farmers, 16 producers, 2 wineries and 2 weekly guests)

2000 people per day, up to 4000 for special events, $30,000 average sales/week

Runner-up for NOW Magazine's Reader Choice (we got a laminate!)

Run mostly by volunteers and 2 part-time staff.
We really like records...

Our Market fully embraces spreadsheets.

We track:

- **Sales** (producers vs farmers)
- **Attendance**
- **Weather**
- **Weekly dot surveys**
- **Online polls**
What we get:

- Year to year sales and attendance trends
- Week to week and month to month trends
- Social media and newsletter growth, open rate and preferences
- We produce annual and mid-season reports of all data.
The LFM Planning Survey

Candice Leung, a dedicated volunteer and planning student suggested we do a real planning survey. Demographics, transportation, economic and social impact.

If our Market was to grow and better serve our area, we needed to know the who, what, where and why of our community.

Knowledge is power!
Method: Do Some Research

What information already exists? What Benchmarks can we use?

Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network Research Survey 2012

Healthy Habits: Farmers’ Markets’ Impacts on Customers

Resources:

The GBFMN and Greenbelt Reports

Farmers Market Ontario

FoodShare

Google it! (Google Scholar has a wealth of knowledge)
Our Benchmarks

Demographics
78% female
22% male
31-60 bulk of age demographic
⅔ of shoppers are their main grocery purchasers for their households.

Attractions & Stats
Vegetables are top selling product
People come for social reasons as well as food.
Average customer spent approx. $40
Average shopper has been going to markets for 7.6 years
67% of shoppers attend each week
Half of customers use cars (most use public transit, walking or bike in Toronto)

Customers wanted:
- seating and tables (one in four are snacking on site),
- local/seasonal food facts,
- vendor ‘branding’ signs,
- market website showcasing grower farms,
- telling the farm ‘brand’ story
- onsite washrooms
- more products/offerings (fresh and value-added)

What does this tell us?
We asked 15 Questions

1. How long have been coming to the Market?
2. How did you find out about the Market?
3. Reason you chose to visit?
4. How do you commute to the Market?
5. How long is your commute?
6. How often do you attend the Market?
7. Food Cost: How would rate the Market
8. How many people do you visit the Market with?
9. Is the market serving the community positively?
10. How do you rate the Market in terms of being a socially inclusive space?
11. How much money do you spend at the market?
12. How many people live in your household?
13. What do you identify your gender as?
14. What ethnicity do you identify with?
15. What’s your postal code?
We set up a “Survey Tent” for 2 weeks at the Market
Volunteers engaged people directly
Online version pushed on our newsletter and social media.

*We weren’t afraid to be annoying.*

Our goal was 10% of our average attendance or 200 respondents. We got 231.
Data Analysis

Who is the average market goer?

Ethnicity
- 75% Caucasian

Household
- 61% Single Family Homes

76% Female
How they got to the Market and from where...
Average spending

$41$ dollars

Reason for attending

- Food: high
- Social: moderate
- Convenience: high
- Support for farms: moderate
- Support for a local...: moderate
- Other: low

Social Inclusivity of the Market (scored out of 5)

1 2 3 4 5
Commuting Times

Mostly close, but some people are travelling!

Frequency of Attendance

Customer loyalty :)

- 50% weekly
- 27.3% monthly
- 22.7% occasionally
Affordability

63% said we’re affordable, but we have room to improve

Accessibility

52.9% said we’re very accessible. 47.1% said we can improve.
How they found us

This confirmed that our advertising dollars were working for us.

But you can’t beat word of mouth.

How long they’ve been coming

Almost half have been with us since the beginning. But they may just be more likely to file out a survey!

What happened to the 3-4 year range?
Highlights of our “Open Feedback”

Is the Market affecting the community positively?

“Yes, But would be great to see a program that subsidizes fresh, healthy food for low-income neighbours in the community”

“It has become a way for people to meet each other and build relationships and partnerships.”

“The market has gotten very big for the park and doesn't seem to have contributed to the growth of the community expect on Sundays”

“I am particularly pleased to the market growing and changing every year. The inclusion of music, special events and one-off vendors is an excellent way to build community and introduce new and diverse talents, business, musicians etc”
Highlights of our “Open Feedback”

What they’re loving:

“Love live music”

“It such a great community hub, with the kids programming and the music and the new cafe and the younger farmers getting a chance to shine and the educational stuff thats often there.”

“The music and other events help draw people out. Whenever I go I see people engaging in social interactions more than grocery shopping”

“Prices a bit higher than grocery stores, however the veggies, fruit, baked goods are fresh as well as some organic certified. I also enjoy being outside, the people and the music”

“I love how there is often music and children's activities/ music. It is also nice that it is adjacent to the playground. I often see families split up with the mom shopping and the dad playing with the kids in the playground.”
Highlights of our “Open Feedback”

And what they aren’t.

“I hate the live music”

“I used to like the market better “

“some of the ‘family friendly’ bands are terrible.”

“you need to get more actual farmers, and less hoity toity foodies selling some exotic variety of squash I’ve never heard of.”

“The pricing is not well-regulated. I’m not sure how people live having the market in the park on Sunday. Maybe Saturday is better? What is the market doing for Leslieville that the Loblaws at Lakeshore +Leslie isn't...”

“More produce vendors would be great”

“I would buy more if the prices were more reasonable”
Conclusion

How we’ve used our information to help our Market and our Farmers
Benefits & Impacts

Entertainment
- More music, bigger bands.
- Entertainment from open to closing time.
- Promote entertainment far and wide.
- Create a more social atmosphere.

Promotion
- Invest in increasing social media presence.
- More physical signage, both around the neighbourhood and at the Market.
- Weekly food specials and contests.
- More photography!

Transportation
- First ever “Bike Picnic” where we’ll throwing a party to encourage all our drivers to trade their 4 wheels in for 2.
- Some people are travelling between 30-45 minutes to get to the Market - further explore our reach.

Accessibility
- Along with a group of volunteers we’ll be starting an accessibility initiative in 2016, looking at opportunities to expand the demographics and inclusivity of our market.
Thank You!

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Questions?