



# Building Local Networks for Integrated Agribusiness Development

## Learning Module Series

**Module 9: Marketing Prospecting**

Page 1

Module 9: Reference Sheets

Page 33

Module 9: Exercises

Page 37



*This learning module series is based on ICRA's 30+ years of knowledge and expertise on functional capacity strengthening in agriculture and is produced by ICRA within the framework of the 2SCALE programme during 2012–2017. 2SCALE – "Toward Sustainable Clusters in Agribusiness through Learning in Entrepreneurship" – is implemented by a consortium of IFDC, BoPinc and ICRA and funded by the Dutch government ([www.2scale.org](http://www.2scale.org)).*

ICRA – Netherlands and Central Office  
P.O. Box 578 – 6700 AN Wageningen  
The Netherlands  
Tel. (31) (0)317 422 938  
e-mail: [info@icra-edu.org](mailto:info@icra-edu.org),  
<http://www.icra-edu.org>

ICRA – France Office  
1101 Avenue Agropolis – BP 5098  
34093 Montpellier CX5 - France  
Tél. (33) (0) 467 612 660  
[icra-Montpellier@icra-edu.org](mailto:icra-Montpellier@icra-edu.org),  
<http://www.icra-edu.org>

ABN AMRO Bank  
IBAN NL14ABNA0539227188  
Swift/BIC ABNANL2A  
VAT: NL805030347B01  
KvK : 41048530

## Module 9: Market prospecting

### Foreword

Marketing a product is a natural, spontaneous process. But also and even more often, it is carefully thought out from the moment a person or an organisation is involved in the actual selling of the product on any specific market. *“Marketing involves finding out what your customers want and supplying it to them at a profit”* (FAO, 2005). Marketing of agricultural products is more than ensuring the flow of a product from the field to the warehouse, or from a warehouse to a seller.

Marketing consists of several, diverse operations and requires multiple skills. A very important skill is to get to know the needs of consumers and customers. In most situations (except in the case of more rural areas), the farmer is not in direct contact with the final consumer. The direct buyer is a commercial intermediary, for example a broker, an aggregator, a wholesaler, or a processor - who are all traders. The objective of these buyers is to satisfy their customers, who can be a very heterogeneous group in terms of their social status, purchasing capacity, location, age, sex, etc. That is why it is important for a supplier, whether a farmer, a processor, or a trader to have a clear idea of the type of “market”, or consumer, their product will be delivered to.

This module on Market prospecting for agricultural products relates to the module on *Marketing of agricultural products* (Module 7), which introduced marketing topics like planning and promotion; and to Module 8 (*Marketing planning of agricultural products*).

Regardless of the purchaser’s profile or income level, marketing concepts and approaches are similar. Where relevant, this module refers to the “base of the pyramid” (BoP – basically the lower-income level) market, to fit with our framework of support to inclusive business. The module looks at basic knowledge on the concepts, pillars, and values of market prospecting as well as concepts such as offering, supplying, product, market study, confidence, etc.

### About this module

#### Learning objectives

At the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to:

- Comprehend the importance of understanding customers’ needs
- Know how to consider a buyer as a partner and not as a competitor in a value chain (VC)
- Organise a prospecting action
- Analyse customers’ commercial needs
- Prepare suppliers to prospect a market
- Be aware of the risks of prospecting

### Proposed outline of the sessions

The module comprises 8 sessions, including the introduction (Session 0) and the synthesis and evaluation (Session 7). Session 1 aims at identifying the participants' initial understanding and perception of the topic. In Session 2 the need for prospecting is highlighted, and Session 3 deals with the need to specify the product or service that is to be marketed. Session 4 relates to understanding the market, whereas Session 5 clarifies the ways to satisfy market demands. In Session 6 the participants prepare their ToR for field coaching.

Please note that the session contents and time indications are not set in stone. Depending on the context and adaptations of the content, it might take more or less time.

Session title	Session activities	Time involved
Session 0: Introduction	Round & Brainstorm <b>Exercise 0:</b> Reflection diary <b>Exercise 1:</b> Refreshing memories	About 1 hour
Session 1: What do we know about prospecting the market?	<b>Exercise 2:</b> What is needed before planning Plenary discussion	About 1 hour
Session 2: The need for prospecting	<b>Exercise 4:</b> Deciding on what you want to do Plenary discussion	About 2 hours
Session 3: What do we have to offer?	Brainstorm <b>Exercise 5:</b> Designing a marketing action plan 2 Facilitator presentations	About 3 hours
Session 4: Understanding the market	Brainstorm <b>Exercise 6:</b> Calculating the cost of the annual action plan Plenary Discussion	About 1.5 hour
Session 5: Prospecting follow-up activities	Plenary discussion <b>Exercise 7:</b> Monitoring and assessing the marketing plan Plenary discussion	About 2 hours
Session 6: Preparing ToR for field coaching	Plenary review Group/individual work	About 3 hours
Session 7: Workshop assessment	Assessment of workshop	30-60 minutes

## Session 0: Introduction

### Introduction

In this introductory session, participants will get to know each other and will develop some first reflections on the topic. It will also be the opportunity to come back and exchange on global aspects and some basic topics of marketing.

Note that if this workshop on market prospecting is part of a larger workshop using other marketing modules, some elements of this introductory session can be skipped.

### Learning objectives

At the end of the session the participants will be able to:

- Be aware of each other's knowledge on marketing
- Understand the workshop objectives
- Explain the importance of prospecting within the whole marketing process

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards for expectations and for Exercise 1 (enough for four groups)
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

#### ***Step 1: Introduction***

1. **Participant introductions:** Participants will generally know each other so this can be very short. If not, ask participants to introduce themselves, the institution they are working for (BSS, Lead firm, etc.), and (if they do), the agribusiness cluster they are supporting. Note all information down on a flipchart on the wall (visible to all).
2. **Facilitator Introduction of the workshop:** Remind participants about the context in which the cluster actors evolve => uncertainty and difficulties of the agricultural sector, both in terms of production (climatic hazards, remote areas, poor quality inputs, old practices, etc.) and market access (many intermediaries, lack of demand, prices' volatility, competition, etc.). All these constraints call for more professionalism from the actors. This means vision, organisation, management, and planning.
3. **Participant expectations and worries on cards:** Ask participants to write down their expectations and worries on coloured cards. The facilitator will summarise these expectations and worries at the end of Step 2 (see below).
4. **Facilitator explanation of workshop objectives and programme:** Explain that this workshop on market prospecting aims to clarify the concept of prospecting, when and

how to prospect, and to make participants aware of the threats and issues that ABCs need to avoid (risks). Then introduce the different sessions that will be developed during the workshop. Give the possibility to participants to amend and validate the programme.

5. **Reflection Diary:** Introduce the idea of keeping a reflection diary in which each participant writes down his/her reflections of the day using a standard format, indication what was done, interesting, important and applicable (see General Introduction; Annex 1).

### **Step 2: Refreshing our memories**

1. **Plenary exercise:** Before going into the specific topic of the module, share with the participants the logic of the marketing process through a quick plenary exercise.

**In plenary**, ask the participants to list the seven (7) steps of a marketing process that were introduced and discussed in the first Marketing module, which are:

- Marketing strategy and planning
  - Market study
  - Market prospecting
  - Negotiation and contract development
  - Promotion and branding
  - Sales
  - Assessment
2. **Group exercise:** Once these topics are validated, divide the participants into groups to work on (**Exercise 1**), which consists of organising the 7 steps of a marketing process in a logical order.
  3. **Plenary presentation and discussion:** Ask each group to post its result on the wall, hiding it with a blank paper before the presentations and debate. Each group then presents its result.

The correct result is as follows:



After the discussion, post this figure (which you have previously prepared) on the wall and keep it there during the entire workshop; you may come back to it from time to time. **Explain** that this sequence is not rigid and appears mostly in the case of formal trade. As most of the trade businesses, especially in Africa, are informal, some steps are not systematically developed (e.g. contracting, branding).

### **Additional reading**

- Reference sheet M9/1: Glossary

## Session 1: What do we know about prospecting the market?

### Introduction

This session aims to assess the participants' knowledge of and experiences with market prospecting. The assessment is done in the form of testimonies.

### Learning objectives

Participants will be introduced to some aspects of the prospecting process and will get a general idea of what market prospecting is and why it is needed.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

#### *Step 1: Exploring each other's knowledge*

**Individual brainstorm:** For 10 minutes, have participants each write on one coloured card what they think prospecting is about. Paste the cards on the wall, and ask one of the participants to read them out loud. At this point, do not make any particular comment but come back to the cards in Session 3 of the workshop. Keep the cards on the wall throughout the workshop.

#### *Step 2: Practising the supplier's and the buyer's role*

1. **Role play exercise in pairs:** Invite the participants to express what they know and how they think about and experience market prospecting through a role play (see **Exercise 2**). The objective of this simple role play is to appreciate the participants' feelings about marketing a product and to identify the need for knowing the market and its key characteristics if wanting to sell a product in an efficient way.
2. **Plenary debate:** In the debate that follows the group exercise, do not judge participants' opinions and feedback; just note down their remarks on a flipchart, seen by all, until the key common elements emerge. This flipchart is kept visible for the rest of the workshop. Explain that you will come back to it in Session 3.

***Advice for the facilitator***

- This session may be skipped if you do the role play in Session 4.
- Frequently remind participants of the importance of mastering the costs (production, marketing, delivery, etc.).
- Prepare ahead of time to choose the names of the products the groups will exchange about.
- This exercise should guide the participants to talk about the elements that constitute prospecting in terms of quality, quantity, delivery, price, human relationships, previous knowledge of the product, etc.
- Talking about a non-agricultural product they might not know well should prove to the participants that without a minimum knowledge of the product you intend to market, they cannot interest a purchaser (unless they are a very good marketer).

## Session 2: The need for prospecting

### Introduction

This session aims to emphasise the fact that prospecting is not compulsory, depending on the situation and context in which the supplier is. It must be done when it is really needed.

### Learning objectives

At the end of this session the participants will be able to understand the importance of setting up a prospecting system, at which moment in time, and why.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

#### *Step 1: Identifying needs to prospect*

1. **Group exercise:** Divided into groups, ask the participants to reflect on situations that require market prospecting and on any preparatory action needed (see **Exercise 3**, based on their own experiences).
2. **Plenary presentations:** Have the groups present their findings by pasting the coloured cards on the wall.

#### *Step 2: Understanding market prospecting as a process*

**Plenary exchange:** Engage in an interactive exchange with the participants on their opinions regarding the main elements that constitute the prospecting process. Do this through the use of some specific questions:

Question	Market Prospecting
<i>What does the term prospecting mean to you?</i>	Identify possible buyer(s) of a certain product in a given market, and ways to promote the product
<i>Which challenges does it relate to?</i>	Who could be interested in the product? Under which conditions?
<i>How to operationalise prospecting (action)?</i>	Cluster representatives (with communication and commercial skills) meet potential buyers. Two important preconditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a good knowledge of the product</li> <li>• Get samples ready and prepare relevant information on the (quality of) product, e.g. in the form of a flyer</li> </ul>
<i>Which output can be expected?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buyer(s) interested by the supplier's offer is/are identified,</li> <li>• Precise needs known (quantity, quality, delivery conditions, etc.)</li> </ul>
<i>When is the best moment</i>	Ideally after a first market study that brings info on the market and a general

<p><b>for prospecting in the marketing process? (see Session 0)</b></p>	<p>overview of the economic and commercial conditions and environment. A market study is not always necessary or possible. If we consider a cluster in a “day-to-day” situation (that is, with no project support), we can assume that in most cases a market study is not likely to happen, due to: i) lack of financial and/or human means, ii) lack of time, iii) the market is local and its main aspects are well known (purchasers, type of products, periods, competitors, formal and informal barriers, prices, ...), etc.</p>
<p><b>What are the possible bottlenecks to actually do market prospecting?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate preparation: limited knowledge of the supply’s potential, of buyers’ demand, weak market study, etc.</li> <li>• Financing issue</li> <li>• Wrong choice of the cluster representatives who deal and negotiate with a potential buyer</li> </ul>

Note: The above table is extracted from Session 3 “The tool box” of Module 7, *Introduction to marketing of agricultural products*.

**Step 3: Getting a better understanding of the demand**

**Facilitator lecture:** Use the following points to guide your presentation to participants on the subject of Demand.

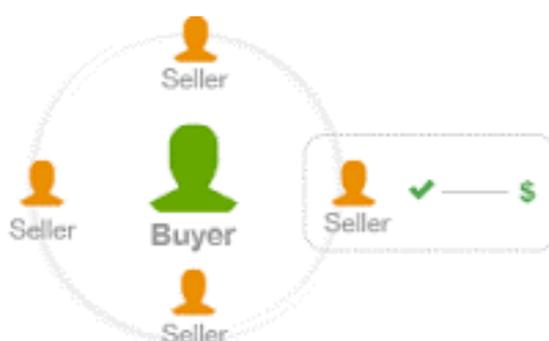
First draw their attention to the two positions in a selling/buying situation. The starting point is the buyer.

Explain that a customer, when wanting to purchase a product, expects a specific quality at a fair price (not necessarily the lowest price, but a price he/she is prepared to pay).

There is the same logic for a supplier who needs to sell a product that satisfies the buyer (in terms of quality and price, essentially).

Point out the terms employed to describe the customer and the supplier’s position. The former “wants to buy”, and the latter “needs to sell”. This difference reveals what can be summarised as “the demand drives the offer”.

Emphasise the fact that, on one end, the customer/buyer generally has various choices to purchase a certain product in terms of origins and market places (this choice is proportionate to the purchasing power); and that on the other end, the supplier is limited in terms of products to market, number of buyers (especially in the case of a small-scale farmer), and competition.



***This explains the interest of a supplier for developing a strategy or a method to understand what a specific market requires (the “why?”).***

Prospecting is really necessary once a supplier decides to offer a **new** product, more variety, a different quality of product, or wants to sell to **new** buyers as is shown in the Ansoff matrix below (*Show this on a flip chart sheet*).

	Existing product	New products
Existing markets	<p>MARKET PENETRATION</p> <p><b>Low Risk</b></p>	<p>PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><b>Higher Risk</b></p>
New markets	<p>MARKET DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><b>Medium Risk</b></p>	<p>DIVERSIFICATION</p> <p><b>Highest Risk</b></p>

In the case of selling to a new buyer, this could result from the decision to avoid an intermediary agent. This kind of decision is risky. It needs strong knowledge of the supply chain and certain skills to replace the intermediary tasks. The knowledge is normally provided by the market study that should be done prior to prospecting.

High precaution must be taken when engaging in prospecting. Reflect on whether you are sure that the costs are covered. Or whether it isn't too risky. The supplier group must reflect deeply on risks involved and, if the group decides to "go for it", it should have the full agreement of all group members to avoid possible tensions.

Another very important question is: Which person(s) will execute the prospecting exercise? This task needs specific knowledge and skills such as:

- Good knowledge of the product to be sold, characteristics and potential
- Human relationship qualities

***Advice for the facilitator***

This session deepens the aspects of the "Tool Box" session (Session 3) of Module 7, Introduction of marketing of agricultural products. Please point out to the participants that they can get more background information on the subject in that module.

## Session 3: What do we have to offer?

### Introduction

This session is about the “key point” of market prospecting: its preparation. Farmers and small-scale actors often think that the market is nearby and ready to buy any new product. But that is often not the case, especially not in a highly competitive environment.

### Learning objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to recognise the importance of being very well prepared before meeting new, potential business partners.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Laptop or video player with speakers
- Educational video on USB: Soya Goussi (see also web link)

#### **Step 1: Charactersizing the offer of products and services**

1. **Plenary brainstorm:** Bring back the result of Session 1 when participants wrote on cards their comments on the role play between a “supplier” and a “buyer”, pasting the cards on a flipchart sheet. Ask participants to point out elements that refer to the product that is to be supplied/offered. Then write these elements on a separate sheet and pin them to the wall.

Thereafter, ask participants to identify any other elements that are missing and should be added to better convince the (potential) buyer to accept to deal with them. (Note: This work aims to alert participants to the importance of having very good knowledge of their offer before thinking of developing a new market.)

**Explain that** a supplier’s offer is divided into two aspects, the product and the services:

- **Product** refers to all technical aspects and features that contribute to the availability of a given commodity and that lead to offer both *quality* and *quantity*, which are two out of the three pillars of a commercial deal or trade.
- **Services** are related to the organisational and logistical aspects of the product’s delivery. The first aspect is the *period of delivery*, which constitutes the third essential pillar of trade. Regularity of delivery is very important when it comes to continuity of the



commercial partnership. Other aspects of services are transport, area of delivery, mode of payment, ways of communication, etc.

**Step 2: Knowing your product**

1. **Plenary video viewing:** Show a 10-minute **Video: Soya Goussi** in Benin, after informing the participants that they will be asked to reflect on the marketing content of it afterwards. This is important to make sure the participants focus on the specific marketing aspects of the video.
2. **Group exercise:** Split the participants then into groups for **Exercise 4**.
3. **Plenary presentations and discussion:** Have each group present its findings by pasting the coloured cards on the wall; the possible answers are in the shaded zone of the following table.

<b>Product</b>	<b>Information</b>	<i>Variety, quantity, harvest period, use of inputs, process (if transformed), nutritional and health value, price, duration (conservation), etc.</i>
	<b>Physical items</b>	<i>Sample, packaging, label / sticker</i>
<b>Services</b>	<b>Information</b>	<i>Date and place of delivery, mode of payment</i>
	<b>Physical items</b>	<i>Visiting cards, pictures, leaflet, personal behaviour</i>

**Conclude that** any prospecting must be based on very good knowledge of both the product one expects to sell and the way to deliver it (services).

**Step 3: Preparing the prospecting contact**

**Facilitator lecture:** Use the following points to advise the participants on this step:

The type of product and service that you, as a supplier, will deliver is of course linked to the kind of buyer/market you are targeting. That is why another important element to consider during the prospecting preparation process is to identify the kind of buyer you will get in touch with. Regarding the (agricultural) product, it may be a wholesaler, a processor (small-scale or industrial), a retailer, a restaurant, etc. Identification is possible in two ways: i) through a (formal or informal) market survey, or ii) through the "implicit" knowledge you have of the market, e.g. through your network.

There are many ways to get in touch with the potential buyer and to organise an appointment; e.g. through a letter by post, a telephone call, internet search, or an unexpected exploratory visit. There is no "ideal" way of doing this and it all depends on the kind of relationship you already have with the potential buyer. The most efficient way is to make a phone call or to physically meet the person.

So at cluster level, you must have a clear common understanding and agreement on what your target is. Think well about the elements to put in place while defending and promoting your product/service.

**Step 4: Knowing the people behind the product and services**

1. **Plenary brainstorm:** Introduce the brainstorm by telling that in addition to good knowledge of the product and of its (associated) services, there is another aspect that is of great importance when preparing prospecting: who will meet the potential buyer?

Ask participants to write on cards what they think is the ideal profile of that person (seller). The cards are read out loud and clustered, as much as possible, into the following “domains”:

- Knowledge of the characteristics/qualifications of the products and its services
- Knowledge of the product costs (and the factors determining its selling price)
- Knowledge of the sector, its competitors
- Knowledge of the activities and preferences of the potential buyer(s)
- Human qualities/attitude/behaviour:
  - Interested in human interaction and relationships
  - Open minded, good listener, good communication skills, good humoured even if the buyer tries to tease, etc.
  - Showing loyalty to the company one represents

**Finally conclude** the brainstorm by drawing a table of do’s and don’ts for a seller.

Do’s	Don’ts
Arrive on time at an appointment	Arrive late at an appointment
Keep calm	Be aggressive or show irritation
Have a positive attitude	Dominate the discussion
Don’t talk too much	Criticise the suppliers
Be loyal to the supply group	Talk about price (unless the buyer requests so)
Give the buyer the feeling your product is unique and made just for him/her	Show disinterest in the product you promote
Etc.	Etc.

2. **Plenary discussion:** Discuss these issues with the participants, ensuring that the following points come up.

In a prospecting meeting, the supplier should **CREATE CONFIDENCE!**

Actually, the buyer will need to know the organisation behind the product, their professionalism in terms of commercial relationships and loyalty, etc. As for any starting business deal, both sides don’t know each other, and each wants to reduce the risks, so the impression given at the first contact is very important, and proofs of professionalism must be given. A professional purchaser is used to recognising good and bad suppliers at the first contact, so be prepared for that.

**Point out:** as people might have noticed, we have not put emphasis on the price. This is because the price should not come in first place. It should be the result of other arguments (quality, quantity, delivery, etc.), and for a supplier it is better to wait for the buyer to ask for the price.

Cost estimates at product and services level need to be made to enable the supplier to establish a profitable price.

In the case of a cluster (or a farmer group), the development of an offer must be done collectively. Members must meet for one day at least to consensually develop their offer,

in terms of product, supply, and to decide who will represent the group in the following phase which consists of meeting the potential buyers. A **SWOT exercise** is a good tool to do this, as it identifies the strengths and weaknesses linked to the product and the market they plan to reach.

As a supplier, be aware that the buyer has more information than you about the market regarding prices, competition, or consumers' needs. The buyer's production knowledge may even be better than yours on marketing and trade. Buyers may produce as well, and they usually know how to judge a product's quality in terms of variety, maturity, etc.

***Advice for the facilitator***

If you only have time for one session in your workshop, use this one, because it gives the main theoretical elements on how to organise prospecting activities.

It is important not to forget to remind the participants that they must focus on the marketing aspects while watching the video on Soya Goussi.

**Additional reading**

- Reference sheet M9/2: Knowing your product (articles)

## Session 4: Understanding the market

### Introduction

This session gets into the core business of prospecting the market. Ideally, this session should include a meeting with a local trader or firm. If time and resources allow you to organise such a meeting, have the participants prepare the interview and review its outcomes, emphasising the main lessons learned (**Option 1**). If this is not possible, organise a role play between a “supplier” group and a “buyer” group (**Option 2**).

### Learning objectives

At the end of the session, the participants should be able to understand how, in practice, to interact with a potential buyer for market prospecting in terms of content (arguments), behaviour, etc.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

#### *Option 1: Physical contact with the market (Interview a buyer)*

##### 1. Preparation by facilitator ahead of time:

**Where?** Think about the venue – there are two choices:

- Visiting the stakeholder in their own working place;
- Inviting the stakeholder to the workshop venue.

The best option is the first one although it has the risk that people are easily “distracted” by business issues. A solution could be to first invite the stakeholder to the workshop venue, and to then organise a second meeting by visiting the workplace of the stakeholder. This decision depends as well on how easy it is to organise moving the participants to the marketplace.

**Who?** Think about what type of “buyer” to choose for this exercise. If for example you are in the rural sector and working in production at cluster level, it would be best to identify a buyer who is specialised in agricultural products, either a wholesaler (preferably) or a retailer. It may be an individual or a representative from a group or firm. In any case the person should be in charge of purchases and be in contact with the suppliers (farmers, processors, wholesalers, etc.). The identification and contact will have to be done by the facilitator prior to the start of the workshop.

**What?** Prepare the content of the exchange with the “buyer” before the meeting. It is useful to know which kind of product this person is specialised in, for example vegetables, fruits, cereals, roots, or dairy.

2. **Group exercise:** Split the participants into groups to prepare a checklist of issues to be discussed with the professional trader (see **Exercise 5**).
3. **Plenary agreement on interview questions:** Ask each group to present their checklist and then have all participants agree collectively on a questionnaire. Here are some examples of issues:
  - Expectation of the product in terms of quality: variety, shape, colour, size, etc. What is most important?
  - Quantities/volumes and regularity of supply
  - Price: is it the most important aspect of a discussion at this prospecting phase (very first contact)?
  - At what moment of the discussion do you accept to discuss the price?
  - When meeting a potential supplier for the first time, what do you expect from him/her?
  - Once you made a first deal with a supplier, what could convince you to make more deals?
  - Is the behaviour of the supplier important and why?
  - Are you usually interested in new suppliers, or do you prefer to stay with your usual ones? Why?
  - Do you think that human relationships in doing business are important?
  - Etc.

Decide who will lead the discussion and who will deal with which question.

4. **The interview:** the discussion with the buyer should not take more than 1 hour.
5. **Plenary discussion:** Animate a discussion, asking participants what they retain from the meeting with the professional trader/buyer about the main aspects of market prospecting. Most of the elements listed in the previous session should be highlighted (see Steps 2 and 4).

### ***Option 2: The role play***

1. **Short plenary introduction:** Explain the procedure of the role play, and then split the participants into groups.
2. **Role play exercise:** See **Exercise 6** for details on how to prepare and conduct the role play, which includes groups of suppliers, buyers and observers.

In plenary, have the groups (supplier, customer) do the role play for 20 minutes. The role play is organised in two steps: First a phone call to make an appointment and then a meeting between supplier and buyer.

After the role play, the observers take 10 minutes to gather their analysis, after which they present their observations and analysis to all participants.

3. **Plenary debate:** Open the debate about the important elements of a prospecting action, the preparatory work needed, the proper attitude, the skills needed, etc.

Return to the first step, the phone call, asking the suppliers' group how they decided on the person to represent the buyer: what were their criteria to choose the person?

### **Plenary concluding remarks to both sessions**

Explain the following issues to participants:

**Have a physical meeting:** Any prospecting step is made through a physical meeting with a potential buyer. It is not professional to imagine one can win a market at distance, just through the telephone or internet. This may be possible only in the case of big firms that have a long-standing, solid reputation.

Keep in mind that prospecting alone does not yet mean winning a market. Even if the meeting with a buyer went very well or seemed to have been very positive, the deal is generally not closed at first contact.

**Attitude:** How to behave in front of a potential buyer? At this step, a person's "social skills" are of high importance. The way in which the supplier introduces themselves to the buyer is crucial. It opens the door to the important topics to develop, i.e. the product's offer and the services (Session 3).

Some important practical tools must be ready before going for a prospecting visit or meeting, like samples of the products (the best samples, obviously) and marketing tools such as visiting cards and leaflets. And never leave the potential customer without any contact references (telephone number, address, email address, etc.)!

#### ***Advice for the facilitator***

- Prepare the meeting with the "potential buyer" by contacting some professional actors in the area of the workshop, and find one interested in participating in this exercise.
- Role play: for the observers' group the preparatory work is important. Indicate the importance of body language of the participants, especially of the suppliers' group.
- Two words could sum up the main objective of a prospecting exercise: BUILDING TRUST!

### **Additional reading**

- Reference sheet M9/3: Three rules of prospecting

## Session 5: Prospecting follow-up activities

### Introduction

In this session, we go beyond actual prospecting of the market. Participants think about what may happen next.

### Learning objectives

At the end of the session, the participants will be able to plan for the action they will take after meeting potential buyer(s).

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers

1. **Group exercise:** Start with a short exercise (**Exercise 7**). Based on the outcomes of Session 4, the groups reflect on the follow-up of a prospecting phase.

2. **Plenary presentations and discussion:** Ask the groups to present their findings. Animate the discussion between participants, and note down the most relevant opinions, according to the following points:

There are various things that can happen after a prospecting phase:

- No news from the (potential) customer. This does not necessarily mean they are not interested.
- The potential buyer is definitely not interested in your offer.
- The customer accepts to carry on and deal with you.

Mention that coaches need to be aware that any new activity that may arise from the customer needs may require new skills and create new constraints and issues, for example regarding equipment, human knowledge, and qualification. So, a good entrepreneurial organisation that succeeds in prospecting the market must be able to anticipate the potential situations and look for solutions as quickly as possible, even before the issues arise.

## Session 6: Preparing ToR for the field coaching

### Introduction

This session is aimed at supporting coaches in the best way in using the new competences gained through this workshop when working with agribusiness clusters on market prospecting.

### Learning objectives

At the end of the session, the participants will have a better understanding of how to coach and support cluster members in market prospecting.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

#### *Step 1: Review the sessions*

1. **Plenary reflection of module:** Guide the participants in reviewing the 5 sessions, asking the following questions:
  - Did you understand well what has been done so far? What needs more clarification?  
*If needed, go over some aspects of the module.*
  - What do you think are the most important parts of the guide that should be used in coaching sessions with the cluster actors?
  - How do you think you can develop the topics during your coaching with cluster actors?
  - Using some of the relevant content of the sessions: Is/are some tools/information/methodology missing? If so, what are they? Discuss.
2. **Individual session:** Ask the participants to systematically review all the sessions, by listing the key points that they have learnt and what will be relevant for use and application during their subsequent coaching sessions.

SESSION	TOPIC	WHAT I LEARNT	WHAT WILL BE RELEVANT TO BE APPLIED TO MY CLUSTER
1.			

2.			
...			

***Step 2: Preparing ToR for the field coaching***

Split the participants into groups of 3 persons maximum. Each group proposes a scenario on how to coach cluster actors on market prospecting.

**Advice for the facilitator**

- Session 6 is an important session as it focuses on enabling the BSS/coaches to facilitate coaching sessions to the cluster members. It is necessary to give them time to express their feelings about the way they think these coaching sessions can be handled.
- Some sessions are more important and less theoretical than others. Priority for coaching can be given to Session 2 (The need for prospecting) and Session 3 (What do we have to offer?)

Some messages related to market prospecting to be kept in mind by participants could be brought to them through a quick brainstorm:

- Good preparation is the key
- Demand guides production, but ... we (supplier) can attract demand
- Before all, we must know very well our product and supply (our strengths and weaknesses)
- Let's look for an "easy market", where we are sure to get a quick profit
- One prospecting exercise must lead to at least five successful commercial campaigns
- Do not just think about the price
- Don't forget that successful trade = confidence = good human relationships and communication
- Anticipate buyers' needs
- We are not the only ones to prospect (competition)
- The buyer knows more about the supplier's job than the supplier knows about the buyer's job
- Make participants (ABC members) reflect on their own situation

If there is only time for one exercise/discussion during this coaching session, the facilitator should ask ABC members to reflect and talk about few points only: i) which buyer/customer to look for, ii) what is the ABC's potential in terms of quality, quantity, delivery means, human professional skills, etc., iii) what are the ABC's strengths and weaknesses to sustainably supply a market, iv) what does the ABC need to prospect a certain market (potential buyer or customer)?

The plenary reflection phase in this ToT workshop is very important to make sure that all participants (coaches) share the reflection on how to transfer knowledge to ABC members. The group work is essential as it provides ideas and time to reflect on how to perform when coaching an ABC.

## Session 7: Workshop assessment

### Introduction

Did this workshop fit the participants' needs and has it satisfied their expectations? Do they now feel able to train cluster actors in the basic knowledge of prospecting the market? These are some of the questions this session would like to get answered.

### Learning objectives

With this assessment, the facilitator can find out whether the workshop was appreciated by participants, and how to adjust follow-up workshops, if necessary.

### Procedure

#### List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards for expectations
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

There are several ways and tools to assess a workshop, at the beginning, during the sessions, and at the end.

- **Before starting the workshop:** each participant writes down their expectation and worries (see Session 0). The facilitator prepares a summary of these expectations and worries to be dealt with during this final workshop session.
- **During the workshop:** at the end of each day (even for a 2-day session), the participants are given the opportunity to reflect on what was done during the day in a Reflection Diary. Ask each participant to indicate how well they appreciated each session, why, and if relevant to propose improvements to the content.
- **At the end of the workshop:** Ask participants to either in plenary, or individually, reflect on how they experienced the workshop.
  - One option: At the end of the workshop, ask participants to fill in the following table – to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, either completed individually on sheets to hand in - or putting an 'x' on a flip chart sheet on the wall, and writing comments on cards to be gone through by the facilitator.
  - Another option: This could alternatively be done in plenary if participants feel comfortable enough to speak out.

**Table 1: Appreciation of the workshop**

Session/topics	Good	Average	Bad
S0: Introduction			
S1: What do we know about market prospecting?			
S2: The need for prospecting			
S3: What do we have to offer?			

S4: Understanding the market			
S5: Prospecting follow-up activities			
S6: TOR About coaching ABCs			
Your opinion on the facilitation			
General comments			

Note: Each participant puts a cross to give his/her appreciation of the sessions and facilitation work, and adds a general comment.

***Advice for the facilitator***

A recurring issue in a workshop, especially in a short one like this one on market prospecting, is that time is too short to go through all planned activities. This often affects the time taken for assessment. This final part is very important, however. So, do not forget to assess at the beginning, during, and at the end of the workshop, as this will give you very useful information.

Before starting this session, prepare the synthesis on the participants' expectations.

**List of reference sheets**

**Reference sheet 1:** Glossary

**Reference sheet 2:** Knowing your product

**Reference sheet 3:** The three rules of prospecting



## Reference sheet M9/1: Glossary

This glossary aims to provide actors within the 2SCALE project with definitions of key terms in agricultural marketing.

The glossary is meant to be interactive, i.e. each reader can propose modifications. This requires centralization and coordination. For any suggested change, please send your remark to ICRA's marketing specialist, Sylvain Dardel, at: [sylvain.dardel@icra-edu.org](mailto:sylvain.dardel@icra-edu.org)

<b>Action plan</b>	Detailed plan outlining, for a short period (few months to one year) the steps to be taken or actions needed to execute a specific strategy. An action plan specifies activities, partners, has a calendar and a budget.
<b>Agribusiness cluster</b>	Group of actors (direct and indirect ones) involved in the economic and commercial promotion of the same commodity or product, organized together for the interest of each other.
<b>Benchmarking</b>	Comparing an actor's business to the best practices of other industries.
<b>Brand</b>	Maker's name or trademark. The brand name gives a unique identity to a product and gives it a strong visibility, and allows making the creator company known. Brand development needs several essential steps, e.g. a proven capacity to produce regularly in terms of quantity and quality, and a good logistic capacity should have been developed to enable the supplier to deliver the product in good shape and timely.
<b>Business Intelligence</b>	Refers to the capacity of an actor, individual or collective, association or firm, to manage both performance monitoring (management, costs master) and market intelligence.
<b>Comparative advantage</b>	The ability of an individual or group to carry out a particular economic activity more efficiently than another individual or group. This definition goes for a country, as well. This approach asks for specialization, which has advantages (best practices, good reputation, etc.) and inconveniences (risks in case of failure of the specialized field due to internal or external causes). To decide whether to develop a new market or not, it is important to know ones comparative advantages.
<b>Competitiveness</b>	The ability and performance to sell and supply goods and services in a given market, in relation to the ability and performance of other actors in the same market. This regards both individuals and clusters, at various levels, from local to international markets. Competitiveness is expressed by various means: cost/price, quality, management (profits), packaging, technology, capacity to innovate, origin (label), etc.
<b>Consumer</b> (intermediate, final)	An individual or enterprise that changes or ends the state of a product. A factory that processes a commodity is known as an <b>intermediate consumer</b> because the (finished) product obtained from the commodity stays in the value chain; the <b>final consumer</b> ends the cycle life by cooking and/or eating the product.

<b>Consumer survey</b>	Market research, consisting in interviewing current or potential consumers of a specific product (fresh or processed) to find out their expectations in terms of quality (taste, form, colour, etc.), prices, period of supply, etc. According to the means available, this survey can be done by interviewing people in a market place, in the street, or by organizing consumers' tests (often done by professional organizations).
<b>Distribution</b>	Supplying goods to retailers. In the agricultural sector, this includes packaging, transport, storage, and delivery of goods. These actions could in principle refer to any position on the supply chain (from farmer to processor for instance) but the term distribution is here only meant to indicate supply to large-scale retail firms (hyper- or supermarkets).
<b>Distribution network ("circuit")</b>	Description of the various steps for a commodity to go from the farmer to the consumer. Each step figures a different actor in charge of the product. This network can be reduced to a small area and very actors ("short distribution network") or cover a long distance and then be treated by many actors or providers ("long distribution network").
<b>Dumping</b>	Commercial practice that consists in selling a product at a price either below the price charged in its home market or below its production cost. It is mainly practised in export markets.
<b>Finished and semi-finished product</b>	At the processor level, a factory can supply two types of products : i) for direct consumption or Finished product (Juice); ii) to be processed again by another factory in order to obtain the finished product (cotton, wood for paper). These terms don't appear in dictionaries, but can be used in agriculture sectors.
<b>Globalization</b>	<p>"The process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale" (Murphy 2010). Sophia Murphy delineates three aspects of globalization:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Global supply chains, based on information and communications technology that enable tightly coordinated trade;</li> <li>2. Liberalization of trade policies, driven by a view of trade and capital investment that sees a single world market as the most efficient outcome to ensure economic development and public welfare;</li> <li>3. The globalization of expectations, a cultural shift in which people aspire to a global standard of middleclass consumption. These three aspects interact and reinforce one another, and all raise challenges for developing countries and their small producers".</li> </ol>
<b>Incoterms</b>	International Commercial Terms, a series of predefined commercial terms published by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). They are widely used in international commercial transactions or procurement processes and intended primarily to clearly communicate the tasks, costs, and risks associated with the transportation and delivery of goods, and to reduce or remove uncertainties arising from different interpretation of the rules in different countries. As such they are regularly incorporated into sales contracts worldwide.

<b>Incoterms (contin'd)</b>	Some Incoterms are: FOB (Fee on Board) and CIF (Cost, Insurance, Freight). The Incoterms rules are accepted by governments, legal authorities, and practitioners worldwide for the interpretation of most commonly used terms in international trade.
<b>Market</b>	General term to denote the fact that a supply meets a demand. This can be physical (a market place in rural and urban areas), or virtual (stock exchange). The term is also used in the case of a large space or area where there are business opportunities (European market for oils, rubber, etc.).
<b>Market Information System, MIS</b>	Mechanism by which the information is taken from various markets places (rural and urban) at the same time, and dispatched to the public in a short time. Its concerns "primary information", by the fact they are collected from the source. It is designed to support marketing decision making. In the 2000's, the second generation of MIS has emerged, called MIS2G. Its main innovations are the use of new ICT, the appearance of private MIS (run by farmers' organizations, stock exchanges, NGO, etc.), and the development of inter-countries MIS (RESIMOA, etc.)
<b>Market prospecting</b>	Action aiming at identifying the potential market to a given product or group of products. It is generally realised through a "prospecting trip" to a certain area (in the country or abroad) to meet potential purchasers with the double objective of i) hearing their expectation in terms of quality, quantity, period and way of payment, etc. and ii) promote its product(s) (through samples) and the supplier (communication and negotiation skills).
<b>Market segmentation</b>	This is a process that involves dividing a broad target market into subsets of consumers who have common needs and priorities and then designing and implementing strategies to target them.
<b>Market study</b>	Description and analysis of the ways a given agricultural product, raw or processed, is commercialized in a given area. Such a work is necessary when one actor (individual or group) knows what to promote and where, but is missing information in the targeted area about the size of the market, the competitors, the demand (quality, quantity), the regulations, etc. Within a development project process, a market study is often followed by a prospecting trip and/or the participation to a trade fair.
<b>Marketing</b>	"Marketing involves finding out what your customers want and supplying it to them at a profit" (FAO, 2005). Marketing is focused on the consumer's needs. That is to say that marketing efforts are efficient when one knows which product to promote /sell, where and to which type of consumer.

<b>Marketing intelligence</b>	Mechanism/set of tools to gather strategic information relevant to a company's market, to anticipate and organize the trade of an agricultural product. It requires 2 minimum inputs: i) Networking, ii) Financial resources to maintain sustainability. It can be developed by private actors with important financial resources and/or with a large social network (human bodies). Market intelligence has a price, however, and in developing countries and in agriculture, people who can afford these facilities are very few. Usually such intelligence is homed at an official (governmental) institution or at a project (mainly). Market intelligence can be very useful but is not very widespread in agriculture in developing countries because of: i) its cost, and ii) its complexity. Sustainability is a big issue in this as well.
<b>Monopoly</b>	The exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service.
<b>Monopsony</b>	A market situation in which there is only one buyer.
<b>Niche market</b>	A specialized but profitable segment of the market, for example the luxury market, the ethnic market, etc.
<b>Observatory</b>	Mechanism or institution with the mission to treat and analyse information to provide decision-making tools to private and public deciders. Information originates from various sources, from local to international, to get the highest quality and the best updated analysis. It mainly works with "secondary information" coming from other institutions as MIS, Ministries, other observatories, intelligence services, private actors, etc. An observatory is also a guarantee for transparency. In rural development and trade, observatories are not developed.
<b>Packaging</b>	The technology of enclosing or protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use. Packaging also refers to the process of design, evaluation, and production of packages. Packaging can be described as a coordinated system of preparing goods for transport, warehousing, logistics, sale, and end use. Packaging contains, protects, preserves, transports, informs, and sells. (source: <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Packaging_and_labeling">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Packaging_and_labeling</a> )
<b>Partner</b>	Individual or (mainly) institution that will bring an added value to an activity, or technically or financially.
<b>Productivity</b>	"The value of the output produced by a unit of labour or capital" (M. Porter) <sup>1</sup> . In agriculture, productivity is understood as the capacity for a farmer to grow crops by innovative technics, by sowing improved varieties, by adding fertilizers to the soil, etc.
<b>Professionalism</b>	The competence or skill expected of a professional. It refers to the capacity of an actor or institution to master duties and functions related to his/her job, in a sustainable way.

---

<sup>1</sup> Competitive advantage of nations, M. Porter, 1990

<b>Promotion</b>	A series of operations designed to publicize a product, to give it visibility to a specific audience. Promotion can be done through advertising in the media and through displays, development of a trade mark (and logo), participation in trade events, etc.
<b>Prospect</b>	Potential customer or client that a producer is targeting through market prospecting and through a promotion action.
<b>Segment</b>	A category of consumers whose needs match a specific and homogeneous lifestyle. With segmentation a commercial operator can target potential buyers of its products, and may apply suitable marketing methods. The segments may be based on purchasing power (luxury market, base of the pyramid, etc.), demographic factors (youth, seniors), social situation (family, single, urban, rural), etc. The concept of segment is linked to “niche market”.
<b>Standards</b>	For agricultural products, there are rules on how to produce and sell a certain product. Standards vary with the wealth of a country to satisfy the various consumers. Exporters must be very well aware of standards in the targeted country.
<b>Strategy</b>	A strategy includes all main steps that need to be taken to achieve a global objective or final purpose, and to operationalize a vision. It generally gives a multi-annual perspective in main lines. The concretization of the strategy is included in an operational plan, usually renewed every year.
<b>Supply chain</b>	The sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of a commodity. A supply chain consists of different stages and actors that transform a raw material into a finished product for delivery to the ultimate consumer. It describes the ways actors ensure a product’s delivery up to the final consumer, and includes process, transport, management, information, etc.
<b>Trade</b>	The action of buying and selling goods and services.
<b>Vertical integration</b>	This term describes the situation in which an economic actor brings together different functions (e.g. production, processing and trade). In the agricultural sector, the most common case is that of exporting firms that, in addition to their core business trade, develop investment for "integrating" functions of production, and sometimes even processing.
<b>Vertical links</b>	Describe relationships between economic actors, from producer to consumer.
<b>Vision</b>	The ability to think about or plan the future. This remains quite theoretical, and should be followed by a strategy to become realistic.

## Reference sheet M9/2: Knowing your product

This reference sheet has three articles on the importance of having a good knowledge of a product and its capacities, in order to get a product to market.

### The importance of product knowledge: How well do you know your products?

By [Adele Halsall](#)<sup>2</sup>, 30/04/2014

We all know that customers aren't just influenced by products and services when choosing who to give their business to – it is the customer experience that comes with buying them that has a bigger effect. The necessity and quality of your products is indeed important, but every market has its players; every company has at least one competitor, and as a result, customers can nearly always choose to have their needs met elsewhere.

This is why product knowledge is so important within any company. Demonstrating strong knowledge and expertise of your products is crucial for creating a positive customer experience and instilling faith and trust within the customer. Without accurate or available product knowledge, your products may as well be worthless. Yet many companies fail to do this well.

#### Covering the basics

Building a dependable product knowledge base within your employees all starts from the bottom, when you are developing your product and [establishing your brand value](#). Your company needs to be able to answer the basics about your product in order to clearly convey where it fits in with the rest of society. Consider the following:

- What is the purpose of your product or service for the customer?
- How can it be described? (size, shape, colour, function, benefits)
- How can customers access it; how is it delivered to them?
- How much does it cost and what are the conditions for its use?

There are other questions and aspects of your product that you are recommended to consider for your own benefit. These include:

- Why your brand is the best avenue through which to obtain the product
- Availability of the product, and how economical or sustainable it is to produce
- The wider implications of using your product, environmentally or socially
- Whether your product is likely to be around for a long time (longevity), or whether it is time-sensitive or dependent on certain conditions (like environment or location).

All of this information must be relayed as readily as possible, both in verbal and written practice. It is one thing to provide the back story of your product, along with its uses and benefits, on the pages of your website or within your product literature or brochures. But your staff and salespeople need to be able to deliver it too, by retaining all of this information and being able to explain it in a simplified, customer-centric way.

---

<sup>2</sup>Adele Halsall is a writer and researcher for Customer Service Guru. She is passionate about retail and consumer trends, and how this is shaped and governed by advertising and social marketing. She is particularly experienced in marketing and customer engagement, and enjoys contributing to ongoing debates related to best business practices, start-up culture, and the culture of customer relations

Technical jargon across all of your customer touch points is not recommended – this can turn customers away and fail to tell them what they really need to know, which is, “How can this product help *me*?”

### **A tailored customer experience**

Customers like it when they are treated like people, so a customer service rep that pays close attention to their needs is much more likely to gain a sale.

This is an area where product knowledge is crucial, as it means understanding your product so thoroughly that your reps are able to make it work for *any* customer. A wider knowledge that is more in-depth is the best way of ensuring your staff will be able to help that particular customer and offer a unique, personalized service that is sure to impress.

...

Either way, it is this ability to recommend the best option to the customer based on their needs, desires or circumstances that shows you have *their* best interests at heart. This in turn builds trust between business and customer and leaves the customer feeling assured and positive about their purchase.

### **Benefits over features**

While listing your product’s features enables the customer to make an informed decision on their own, it can also leave them feeling a little overwhelmed with information and at worst, unable to see what value the product will have in their own lives.

You must therefore be able to explain exactly how the product could make a difference to the customer – whether it will make them look better; feel better, or their life easier; happier; healthier or more productive. This again is where your knowledgeable and perceptive customer service reps come in.

And what’s the best way to get to know any product? By using it, of course. It is recommended that all employees go through the process of purchasing your product and have a go at using it themselves. This will enable them to see the unique benefits it could potentially bring from a first-hand perspective. They will be essentially stepping into the shoes of your customers and see the product’s functions and features in whole new light.

### **Looking from the outside in**

And last of all, don’t forget customer feedback – that vital thing that gives you precious insight into what your customers *really* think, and enables employees to expand their knowledge.

The growth of any new product or business is a journey that the whole team should embark on together. Above all, remember that every setback is just another opportunity to learn.

## The Importance of Knowing Your Products and Services

By Ivan Misner<sup>3</sup>, 18/11/2010

When your referral marketing plan is working well, prospective customers buy from you the first time because they have been referred by your sources. They may continue to buy from you because they trust you and develop a good relationship with you. But whatever the reasons they come and whatever the reasons they stay, they are your customers primarily because they need your products and services.

A clear idea of your range of products and services is something your sources need to communicate to prospects. For each product or service you plan to market during your referral marketing campaign, you must be able to articulate for your sources the answers to the following questions:

- What is the purpose of your product or service?—What needs does it satisfy?
- How would you describe it?—What are its shape, size, functions, key features, principal activities, benefits?
- How is your product or service delivered to the customer?
- How much does it cost and under what conditions?

There are other questions concerning your products or services that you should answer for your own strategic purposes. Is your product becoming obsolete? Is there a newer or better way to provide the same service? What are the social and environmental effects of your product or service? Will economic or regulatory trends force you to change your products or services or the conditions under which you provide them? In the long term, will you be satisfied to continue to offer these products or services?

Knowing the answers to the questions above will help you clearly communicate your products and/or services to your referral sources. This is extremely important because only when you're able to do this will your referral sources be able to effectively refer business to you.

---

<sup>3</sup> Dr Ivan Misner is the Founder of BNI, the world's largest business networking organization. He is from the University of Southern California. He is a New York Times Bestselling author. He is a columnist for Entrepreneur.com and Fox Business News and has taught business management at several universities throughout the USA. In addition, he is the Senior Partner for the Referral Institute – a referral training company with trainers around the world. Dr Misner is considered to be one of the world's leading experts on business networking

## The Importance of Knowing and Understanding your Product

By Roger Bryan<sup>4</sup>, 08/04/2014

### How Important is Knowing your Product?

... Out of all of the posts we've made in the past year, one thing we haven't talked about is product development and knowing your product. You might think this has nothing to do with marketing, but when you really stop to think about it: How can you successfully market something if you don't know what it is, don't have a defined plan for it, or haven't gotten to know it entirely? Whatever kind of business you might have, a product is an absolute must. Why? Because otherwise you don't have a business.

... All businesses have a product of some kind. The problem we've noticed, though, is how often people don't understand their product, haven't defined their product or, in some cases when a person is just starting a company, they don't even know what their product is or is going to be. This can't happen, your product is the single most important thing about your business and you need to know what it is and know everything about it.

### Getting to Know and Defining your Product

If you already have a business and a product, you want to focus on getting to know and defining your product. The best way to do this is to ask yourself a few questions that will help you start this process.

1. What is your product?
2. What does it do?
3. What solution/benefit does it provide to an individual who buys it?
4. Why is there a need for this product?
5. Why is your product superior to those similar to it?
6. What benefits do you offer that other companies with the same or a similar product do not?
7. Who is your target buyer? What is their age, gender, education, income, occupation, and why do they need this product?
8. What problem are you solving for people with this product?

Without having a proper understanding of your product you can't do effective marketing. You need to understand exactly what you're marketing, why people need it, and who you're marketing to in order for a strategy to be effective.

### Figuring out what your Product is

If you're just starting a business, but don't know what your product is yet you need to find out before you do anything else. Not only is marketing impossible without a defined product, but a business itself is almost non-existent when you don't know what it is you're selling. So, how do you figure out what your product is? Luckily, there's a set of questions to get you started on this as well.

1. What problems do you want to solve for people?
2. What kinds of products do you wish were around for you to purchase?
3. What do you imagine your target audience will be?
4. What do you want the focus of your business to be?

This is a way to start brainstorming about what you want your product to be. The real thing you need to think about is simply: What do you want to sell to people? What can you provide to them that will

---

<sup>4</sup> R Bryan is Founder at Enfusen Cie. He was #40 on Entrepreneur Magazine's Most Influential Digital Marketers in 2016. His past companies have made INC Magazine's Fastest Growing Companies in 2011, 2012, & 2013

help them and make you money at the same time? Once you've figured out what your product is going to be, you can go back to the previous section of this post to work on defining your product.

A defined product means a defined business, marketing strategy, and plan of attack. Before anything else; before marketing, business plans, or anything else can happen you have to know what your product is. Your product is what your business and your marketing will be centred around.

## Reference sheet M9/3: The three rules of prospecting

The article below was written by Simon Chan, a trainer, speaker and writer who helps distributors find better prospects.

### 3 Rules to Connecting with Strangers (Cold Market Prospecting)

[Simon Chan](#)

Here are 3 rules you can use to connect with prospects better.

#### Rule 1: Long Lost Friend

Most people don't do well with cold market because they start with the wrong mental approach. They see the other person as an intimidating stranger that has no interest to what they have to offer. If you have this attitude, you are bound to fail and not build a connection.

It will make you nervous and the conversation will be awkward.

The best approach is to think of the other person as a "long lost friend" that you have not seen for years.

*One technique I love to use is to imagine the stranger as someone I had gone to high school with and it's the first time we've spoken in years.*

When I imagine my stranger as the "long lost friend" I immediately look forward to learning about him. Which brings up the next rule...

#### Rule 2: Listen More and Talk Less

If you want people to like you, you must let them talk.

Everyone loves to talk about themselves so the more you let them talk, the more they will like you.

On the flip side, the more you talk, the more you bore them and they will not like you.

You need to be sincerely genuinely interested in the other person and if you are, it should be natural for you to let them talk.

It goes back to the "long lost friend" that you haven't seen for years.

Ask him questions and let him talk and share what he's been up to.

The more he talks, the more you will get to apply the third rule to connecting with cold market strangers...

#### Rule 3: Find Things in Common

We naturally like people who have things in common with.

Think back to the last time you bumped into someone that went to the same high school as you did.

Instantly you felt closer to him and felt a stronger bond. Even if they went to the school at different years, you still felt a connection.

The same connection is felt for people who grew in the same hometown and especially people who like the same sports teams.

You can be in a bar with strangers and immediately build a strong connection with people if you are rooting for the same team.

When you can establish some commonality, people will be more interested to build a relationship with you.

The key to finding a common point is to listen and let the person talk.

Once you uncover commonality, then go share how you are similar.

### Cold Market Recruiting Secrets

The next time you meet someone you don't know, remember to follow the 3 rules

- 1) They are your "long lost friend"
- 2) Be interested in them and let them talk more
- 3) Find things in common with them

If you apply these 3 rules, you will never run out of prospects to talk to.

Not only will you be able to connect with cold market, but you will get them to know you, like you and trust you.

## Instructions on group work and exercises

Before starting each exercise and the group work, please verify that all group members have well understood the exercise or the assignment at hand.

### To the facilitator:

- Make sure participants are distributed into groups of interest, based on gender, or at random, whatever is needed. The objective is to stimulate real interaction between all the participants at the end of the day, that means to insure that one moment or another any of them will get the opportunity to express him/herself and to be listened by others. This supposes they feel comfortable enough in his/her group, and that these groups are motivating enough: sometimes it is good to make mixed groups to avoid boring exchanges between people that know too well each other, sometimes it's better to make it easier for participants (for example having shy women together) ...
- Make sure each group receives adequate tools and materials such as flip chart sheets, markers, etc.
- Assign an appropriate place/location to each group and sufficient chairs and tables so that they can work comfortably.
- Make sure the participants have a good understanding of the task at hand before they split into their groups so that they do not spend unnecessary time in trying to understand the assignment.

### To the participants:

Discuss and exchange within the group about your individual understanding of the expected outputs of the exercise and make sure to come to a common understanding on:

- The objective of the exercise (what is expected and why?)
- How to proceed to answer the question as a group
- How to "visualise" your findings (using poster paper or pin board and coloured cards or the computer)
- Who to appoint to lead/moderate the discussion
- How and who to present results during the plenary session
- If relevant: Who to be in charge of the final electronic write up

## Exercise 1: Refreshing memories

*Note: This exercise is only needed if it is the first module on marketing given in the series.*

1. The participants form 4 groups.
2. Each group receives 7 coloured cards. On each card one main marketing step is written:
  - Negotiation and contract
  - Sales
  - Assessment
  - Market study
  - Market prospection
  - Marketing planning
  - Promotion and branding
3. The groups organise the cards in a logical order, according to what they think the marketing process sequence is.
4. The groups present their sequence in the plenary.

### Exercise 2: What do we know about prospecting?

1. The participants form pairs. One of the pair members represents the “supplier” and the other the “buyer”.
2. Each group gets a name of a product that the “supplier” will defend/promote in a face to face (F2F) conversation with the “buyer”, to encourage the latter to acquire the product. The product is different for each of the pairs and may be an agricultural or a non-agricultural product.
3. Follow the instructions in the box.

<b>First phase</b> (10 minutes maximum)	Each pair receives from the facilitator the name of a product (agricultural, non-agricultural) that they will discuss between the “supplier” and the “buyer”.
<b>Second phase</b> (5 minutes)	The participants write their own feelings about this exercise on a paper (to be memorised).
<b>Third phase</b> (10 minutes)	Same pairs, but roles inversed: the earlier supplier is now the buyer and the earlier buyer is now the supplier. The pairs receive the name of a different product for another discussion between the “supplier” and the “buyer”.
<b>Fourth phase</b> (5 minutes)	The participants write their own feelings about this second exercise on a paper (to be memorised).

### Exercise 3: The need to make a prospecting plan

1. The participants form 4 groups and reflect/exchange on their own experiences regarding the following issues:
  - Is it always necessary for a supplier (either an individual or a group) to prospect the market?
  - Under what conditions is it necessary?
  - When is it possible to implement a prospecting exercise? Are there any preparatory actions to be taken? If yes, what are they?
  - What other actions must be taken to succeed in prospecting?
2. Then two groups come together to share their views, discuss the same questions again, and they write down their answers on coloured cards.

**Exercise 4: What do we have to offer?**

**Group work**

The participants imagine what must be organised to prepare a meeting with a potential buyer, in terms of product and services.

1. Form two groups: one focuses on the product, the other one on the services. These two focus topics are divided into two aspects - information and materials, knowing that:
  - Information = what will you tell / explain to convince your potential buyer?
  - Material = what will you show / present / give to the potential buyer?
2. Each group receives cards of two colours, one colour for the “information” answers, and the other colour for the “materials” answers.
3. Based on the video just shown on Soya Goussi and the participants’ own experiences and knowledge, the groups fill in the following table.

<b>Group 1 Product</b>	<b>Information</b>	
	<b>Materials</b>	
<b>Group 2 Service</b>	<b>Information</b>	
	<b>Materials</b>	

**Exercise 5: Understanding the market (Option 1)**

This exercise relates to the meeting with a market professional (Session 4, option 1, Physical contact with the market).

1. The participants form 2 groups. Each group reflects on the questions and issues that could be discussed with the professional visitor.

The questions on which the group will work relate to the following situation:

*You are about to meet a market professional. You want to know what their specific requirements regarding a certain product are. Their demand may concern the product itself, the service offered, or other aspects.*

2. The groups to make a checklist of issues to discuss.

## Exercise 6: Understanding the market (Option 2)

This relates to the role play exercise offered as Option 2 in Session 4.

1. The participants form 3 groups: i) suppliers, ii) customers/potential buyers and iii) observers. The latter group should not be more than 3 persons.
2. Each group receives its specific scenario: the suppliers (farmers) and the buyers will stick to their own scenario without knowing the other scenario. Only the observers' group will receive both scenarios.
3. Take 40 minutes to prepare the role play in groups
4. Act/play it altogether for 30 minutes. Follow the scenario below for each group and instructions for how each group will act.

### Supplier group

#### Scenario:

You are a farmer organisation who has been producing soybeans for the last 15 years.

Your organisation can offer 2,000 Metric Tons (MT) of soybean annually, in 3 varieties:

- Variety *Bella*, which you started to produce and sell three years ago. This is the most popular variety (both the fresh and processed product) but more difficult to market due to its fragility and relatively low production (400 MT per growing season). Its market price is 400 FCFA/kg
- Variety *Larga*, quite resistant to climatic variation, with a good production: 1,000 MT per growing season. The market price is 350 FCFA/kg
- Variety *Boppy*, which has high yields but small grains that are not very rich in oil: 600 MT per growing season and a market price of 200 FCFA/kg.

Your group does not face major marketing issues, you have regular customers that are the local wholesalers and retailers. All sales are done from your location.

You are now facing a critical moment in your existence, however. You are receiving more and more requests from farmers to produce soybean, and your traditional buyers can't purchase more than what they currently take from you. So you will need to find new customers.

Thanks to a marketing study trip organised by ICRA, you heard about a processing firm that recently settled about 30 km from your place, and that is planning to process soybean into oil and goussi. You have the direct phone number of the firm's owner.

#### How to play:

You prepare this play that is organised into two scenes: a phone call and a meeting:

1. *The phone call*

This call must convince the potential buyer to accept to meet you.

Choose one person in your group that will be responsible of this call. Prepare together some arguments to be discussed. Don't forget that this call must be as quick and clear as possible.

## 2. *The prospecting meeting*

The group is facing the potential buyer. You prepare and organise your arguments that aim at convincing them of the importance of purchasing your product, at least for a test phase. These arguments will be based on the scenario above and on the information given in Session 3 of this module's Facilitators' guide. Be creative when bringing in your arguments, for example regarding packaging and places of delivery! While preparing your arguments, try to imagine (anticipate) what the arguments and words of the buyer could be. Do not forget that the produced volume mentioned in the scenario above is distributed among all your customers. Prepare some (fake) documents on your organisation and activities, samples of your product, and close the meeting with some engagement from the buyer. (S)he should at least come back to you on a very short term, give an immediate answer (buying or not?) or make a first purchase (if interested).

### Potential buyer group

#### Scenario:

You are a processing unit, specialised in oil production. Among raw material, you are used to treating soybeans to produce oil and goussi. In your area, there are three varieties of soybean:

- Variety *Bella*, which is the most popular one (both fresh and processed). Your need is around 500 MT per campaign. The market price is 400 FCFA/kg.
- Variety *Larga*, not of higher quality but still appreciated by the market and with a good production. Your need is around 600 MT per campaign. The market price is 350 FCFA/kg.
- Variety *Boppy*, which is quite productive but has small grains that are not very rich in oil. You are not interested in this variety. The market price is 200 FCFA/kg.

A few weeks ago, you received a visit from ICRA and heard about a farmer group producing soybean that is located 30 km from your unit. At that moment, you expressed your interest in meeting them, because it is part of your job to find new suppliers. But you do not have any specific preference for this new group. For example three days ago you met another soybean supplier who offered you 400 MT of the *Larga* variety for 370 FCFA/kg. You haven't decided yet to accept this proposition.

#### How to play:

You prepare this play that is organised into two scenes: a phone call and a meeting.

### 1. *The phone call*

You will receive a phone call from someone representing the farmer group indicated by ICRA. You accept their proposal to meet. As you don't want to lose time in meaningless vain talks, you try to get a minimum of information about what they want to talk about and about their proposition beforehand. The phone call should convince you to accept the meeting.

2. *The prospecting meeting*

Your group is facing the potential supplier group. You need to be convinced by their proposition before accepting any deal and business partnership. You show two kinds of reaction during this meeting: i) First reluctance to their proposition; it is part of your role as a buyer not to “jump” on the propositions, even if they are very good; ii) You express some interest and start discussing concrete aspects of the deal: price, quantity, means of delivery, etc.

Ask for samples of the product. At the end of the meeting, don’t say: “yes, we will buy from you!” but just promise to get back to them soonest with an answer. Ask for some documents on the farmer group, visiting card or leaflet, etc.

**Observer group**

You will have to note down every word, every move and attitude of both groups that you find relevant to that exercise, especially the farmer one.

First, while the groups are preparing the role play, return to the content of Session 3 and make sure you know and understand very well which main aspects are needed for prospecting. You will need to assess whether they have been taken into account by the group during the play. The facilitator can assist you in this preparatory work.

You will receive both scenarios (of the supplier and the buyers’ groups) to better understand their background and “strategy”.

Among your observer group, distribute the tasks according to the important aspects to look at during the play, which are: i) the words used, ii) the attitude of the person who acts, iii) the attitude of the other members of the group (are they involved?), etc.

Then, watching the play:

***During the phone call:*** Be aware that this is a very important moment because it is the very first opportunity for the supplier to promote the product, and it needs to be successful to obtain an appointment (*for the play, this appointment will take place anyway*).

Note what you consider as strong and weak aspects of this call and summarise them as follows (put a cross in the columns that are selected):

The way the supplier managed the call	Good	Could be better	Bad
Brevity of the call (go to the point)			
Clarity of the request (having an appointment)			
Courtesy			
Quality of listening and giving space to the other person			
Convincing			

*Note: The list in the table is not exhaustive; you can add whatever element you think relevant.*

Explain the following to the participants: if you would be the buyer and received this call, would you be persuaded to meet the supplier?

***During the prospecting meeting:*** Your task is to observe the play, and not interfere at all in the talks. Listen and observe the play, you will present your observations/analysis after the play. The main aspects you will look at are the following:

- Are the farmers convincing enough in promoting their product?
- Are the farmers showing sufficient knowledge of their product?
- Were samples shown (even fake ones) to the buyer?
- Was the way the farmers talked to the buyer appropriate, i.e. not aggressive?
- How did the farmers manage to guarantee a follow-up of this meeting in the short term: another contact with the buyer, hopefully followed by a sale?
- How was the suppliers' behaviour/attitude during this meeting? Has it contributed to convincing the buyer?

### Exercise 7: Follow-up after the prospection

The participants form 3 groups and each group answers the same questions:

- What can happen next after prospecting the market?
- What should you, as a supplier, do?



ICRA – Netherlands and Central Office  
P.O. Box 578 – 6700 AN Wageningen  
The Netherlands  
Tel. (31) (0)317 422 938  
e-mail: [info@icra-edu.org](mailto:info@icra-edu.org),  
<http://www.icra-edu.org>

ICRA – France Office  
1101 Avenue Agropolis – BP 5098  
34093 Montpellier CX5 - France  
Tél. (33) (0) 467 612 660  
[icra-Montpellier@icra-edu.org](mailto:icra-Montpellier@icra-edu.org),  
<http://www.icra-edu.org>

ABN AMRO Bank  
IBAN NL14ABNA0539227188  
Swift/BIC ABNANL2A  
VAT: NL805030347B01  
KvK : 41048530