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This case is written by the Partnership for Innovation in Education with Clark Montessori and Kilgour School students. This format is based upon the Case Method. © 2016

GORMAN HERITAGE FARM

Gorman Heritage Farm has not seen their membership base grow in a number of years. Knowing there's been momentum around "buying organic", they embark on a focused marketing campaign illustrating the benefits of organic fruits and vegetables. Are you ready to join the team, and help create a convincing marketing campaign encouraging people to "go organic?"

Situation

When Claire Long first set foot on the grounds of Gorman Heritage Farm, she knew she was right where she belonged. Gorman was a working farm, with volunteers and staff raising animals and crops using healthy and sustainable agricultural practices.

"This is the way everyone should be getting their food. It's healthier, tastes better and it's more environmentally sound," said Claire.

As the new volunteer coordinator for Gorman, Claire was responsible for engaging new and existing volunteers to help her staff oversee the Farm. In addition, it was her job to educate volunteers on the benefits of organically and locally grown food.

Over the past few weeks as she settled into her new position, Claire reviewed the volunteer and membership numbers from the past 10 years, and she noticed the numbers were either stagnant or decreasing slightly. With organic and local food preferences increasing, she believed Gorman was now competing against more farmers markets and other organic options now available in the area.

Claire wanted to take a fresh look at recruiting volunteers and Farm members who might not know the benefits of growing organic food. She knew this initiative was necessary to sustain, and grow, the work performed on the farm in the coming years. Where she came from, out west, more people were following

the local/organic trend. But in Cincinnati, it seemed there were still a significant portion of the population who didn't even know the benefits of buying local and organic! Claire surmised there was significant potential for recruiting more Gorman Farms members while also promoting healthy eating choices.

Being new to the position, Claire's first task involved developing a volunteer plan for the next Board meeting. She saw this as an opportunity to propose new growth ideas for the organization. At the Board meeting, Claire presented a comprehensive marketing plan, with goals in growing the number of volunteers and paying members. As she had dabbled in marketing before coming to Gorman, she felt their small team of marketing strategists could develop an effective and exciting plan.


Claire knew her primary communication message hinged on providing concrete proof that eating local and organic food was beneficial. She knew her message had to be engaging and fun, but it also had to make sense, considering organic food typically cost more money from the grocery store. As the Board was already grappling with how to tackle the Farm's recent flat membership and volunteerism numbers, they approved Claire's plan including giving her a dedicated team to develop and implement the plan. They knew she was the obvious choice to take on this new marketing campaign.

Excited, Claire was ready to get to work. She knew with an entire team at her disposal, this plan would have a great chance for success. To engage and motivate more community action, she had to prove how organically grown foods were beneficial to the region. She assembled a marketing team that would share the benefits of organically grown produce, and prove -- through experimentation -- the value of organic foods through a "see-and-taste-for-yourself" campaign. She was relying on her marketing team to perform both secondary and primary research, as the Farm would grow both organic and non-organic produce. With her marketing team developing this creative and engaging plan, she knew they could reach a larger portion of Cincinnatians.

Organization Background

Gorman Heritage Farm (GHF) is a 122-acre non-profit historic working farm and outdoors education center, inviting its visitors to explore and learn the history, methods and values of a working family farm in a natural setting. The Farm consists of 30 tillable acres, a farmyard with a variety of animals, a garden, 40 acres of wooded hillside, and a natural pond. Members, casual visitors, school groups and many others visit the Farm during the course of the year. The paid staff included both farming and administrative professionals, supported by a strong cadre of volunteers.

The Farm practices sustainable agriculture with all natural (non-chemical) solutions supporting its mission of "Building Healthy Futures". While not a certified organic farm, GHF follow the spirit of healthy and sustainable food production. Their gardens use only natural amendments and bio-intensive gardening methods, including cover crops, raised beds compost and natural mulching methods, and Biochar. Their livestock is raised without the use of



antibiotics, steroids or hormones. Where possible, GHF chicken and meat animals are pasture raised and grass fed.

In addition to its other programs including education, camp and Service Learning, Gorman has a large Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) where families purchase shares and receive 27 weeks of fresh produce from their gardens. Any additional vegetables are sold through the Farm's gift shop to walk-in customers.

The Farm is an ideal outdoor classroom connecting eager learners with topics including history, food systems, life science and geology. Many children do not understand that eggs do not come from the grocery store, or that cotton grows on a plant, while wool is from a sheep. GHF offers the opportunity to teach these concepts to the youngest learners.

History of Gorman Heritage Farm

Shawnee, Miami, Mingo and Chickasaw Indians originally hunted in the area of Gorman Heritage Farm. Their trails led from the Ohio River north to settlements near Yellow Springs. These trails eventually became military roads as the European settlers pushed further to the west and north. In 1789, James Cunningham moved from Kentucky to 640 acres of land that included the low hills, the limestone slope and the lowland fields that are now Gorman Heritage Farm. By 1835, the land was owned by Edward Brown, a Scottish immigrant.

It is believed, through family history, that Edward built the original house, bank barn and springhouse. Eventually, Edward Brown sold his land to a cousin, George Brown, and moved with his immediate family to Illinois. One of George Brown's daughters, Isabella, married Amos Gorman and together they had six children, one of whom was "Pete" Gorman, the father of Jim and Dorothy Gorman. Jim and Dorothy Gorman took over operation of the farm in 1943.

In 1996, after years of careful planning, Dorothy and Jim turned their beloved farm over to Cincinnati Nature Center (CNC). Under CNC stewardship, the farm was transformed from a family farm, to the Heritage Farm with an outdoor education center. New elements, such as the hiking trails, children's garden and educational programs were added to ensure visitors had the opportunity to enjoy the property, while learning about farming and healthy use of the land. Also in 1996, the Village of Evendale donated a 22-acre land parcel along Reading Road, and built the interpretive building and parking lot.

In 2003, the Cincinnati Nature Center turned the farm over to the Village of Evendale, establishing the Gorman Heritage Farm Foundation to operate the farm. The Foundation, its board of directors and the farm staff remain committed to preserving the legacy entrusted to them by Dorothy and Jim Gorman.

"Going Organic"

Why Choose Organic?

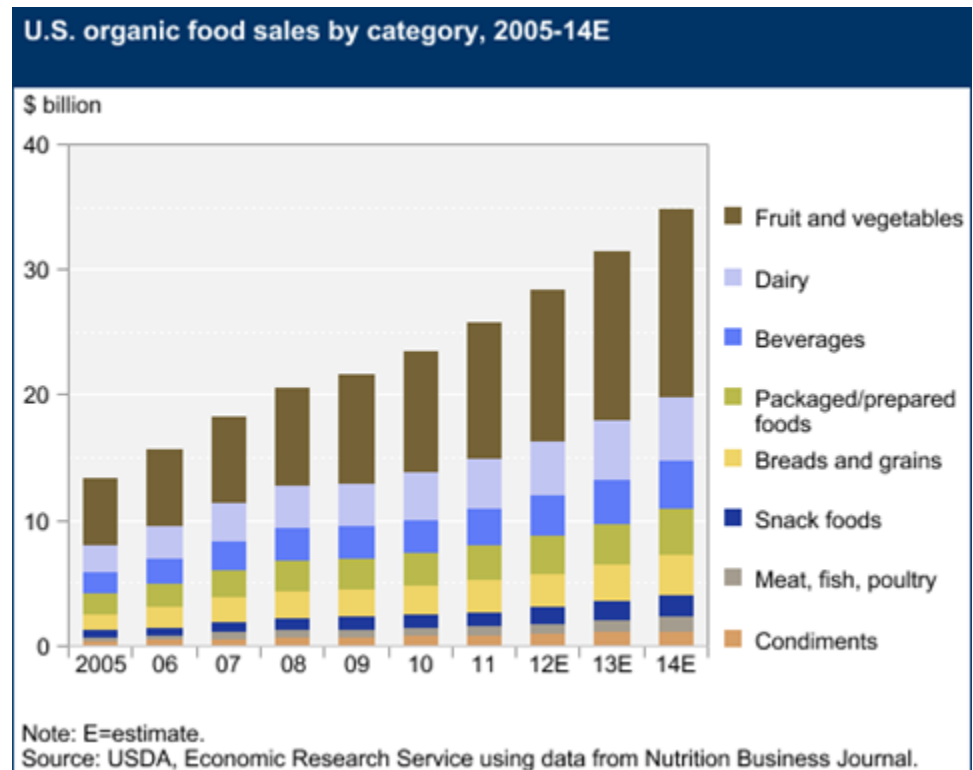
As Claire's team embarks upon creating their "see-for-yourself" marketing plan, they must research the arguments for going organic. Current research showed

organic fruits, vegetables, and grains contained higher levels of antioxidants and lower levels of pesticides compared to the same conventionally grown food. In fact, some studies found the frequency of occurrence of pesticide residues was four times higher in conventional crops than organically grown foods. And organically grown grains contained lower levels of cadmium, a toxic metal. Research showed these attributes for organically grown foods resulted in a reduced risk of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative diseases, and certain cancers.

Consumer research showed health benefits are one of a handful of reasons people choose organic. One of the common benefits proclaimed about organic foods is a more saturated (higher quality, authentic) tasting profile. Also, people cite the environmental benefits to people living and working on organic farms.

The Organic Market

According to the *Nutrition Business Journal*, U.S. sales of organic products were an estimated \$28.4 billion in 2012—over 4 percent of total food sales. By 2014, food sales are estimated to reach \$35 billion.



Fresh fruits and vegetables have been the top selling category of organically grown food since the organic food industry started retailing products over 3 decades ago. They continue to outsell other food categories, according to the *Nutrition Business Journal*. Produce accounted for 43 percent of U.S. organic food sales in 2012, followed by dairy (15 percent), packaged/prepared foods (11 percent), beverages (11 percent), bread/grains (9 percent), snack foods (5 percent), meat/fish/poultry (3 percent), and condiments (3 percent).

Most organic sales (93 percent) take place through conventional and natural food supermarkets and chains. The Organic Trade Association (OTA) estimates the remaining 7 percent of U.S. organic food sales occur through farmers' markets, foodservice, and marketing channels other than retail stores. The number of [farmers' markets](#) in the United States has grown steadily from 1,755 markets in 1994, when USDA began to track them, to over 8,144 in 2013. Participating farmers are responding to heightened demand for [locally grown](#) organic product. A USDA survey of market managers found that demand for organic products was strong or moderate in most of the farmers' markets surveyed around the country, and that managers felt more organic farmers were needed to meet consumer demand in many states.

Who is Choosing Organic in the United States?

The following charts provide a survey of who is choosing organic within the United States and where they are located.

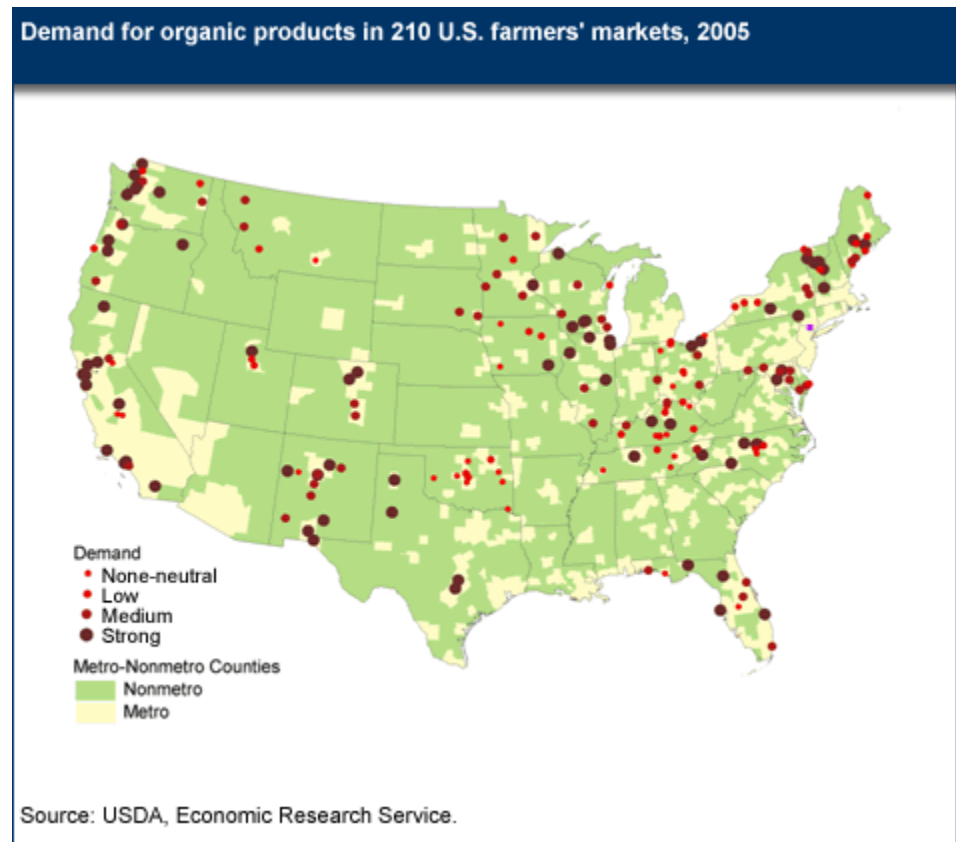
	% Actively Try to Include	% Actively Try to Avoid	% Don't Think About Either Way
East	39	18	41
Midwest	47	17	34
South	43	13	41
West	54	12	34
Big/Small City	50	16	32
Suburb	46	8	44
Town/Rural	37	19	41

Organic Food Preferences by Age, Political Party and Income

	% Actively Try to Include	% Actively Try to Avoid	% Don't Think About Either Way
18 to 29 years	53	13	32
30 to 49 years	48	13	38
50 to 64 years	45	16	38
65+ years	33	19	44
Republican	40	20	40
Independent	45	14	38
Democrat	48	12	36
Household Annual Income \$75,000+	49	11	39
Household Annual Income \$30,000 to \$74,999	45	13	40
Household Annual Income Under \$30,000	42	24	31

With roughly 30-40% of the population not giving any thought to organic, there is a potential to have a significant impact with an education marketing campaign, educating the population about organic options.

As shown below, a USDA survey of market managers found demand for organic products was strong or moderate in most of the farmers' markets surveyed around the country.



Conducting an Effective Organic vs. Non-organic Experiment

A key part of legitimizing the “see-for-yourself” marketing campaign hinges on experimentation, comparing selected types of organic and non-organic foods. To ensure this experiment is done correctly, the marketing team will require knowledge of the following steps using the scientific method:

- **Ask a Question** The scientific method begins when you ask a question about something observable using these inquiry prompts: How, What, When, Who, Which, Why, or Where? And, in order for the scientific method to answer the question, the results must be measurable.
- **Do Background Research** To help develop an effective plan, a savvy scientist must know how to perform research, using library and Internet materials. It’s always useful to know how others tried to solve this challenge, and how you might learn from their work.
- **Construct a Hypothesis** A hypothesis is an educated guess.
- **Test Your Hypothesis by Doing an Experiment** Experiments test whether a hypothesis is supported or not. Make sure your experiment is a “fair” test by changing only one factor at a time, while keeping all other conditions the same. You should also repeat your experiments several times to confirm the first results weren’t an accident.

- **Analyze Your Data and Draw a Conclusion** Once your experiment is complete, collect your data, analyze it, and see if your hypothesis is correct!

Developing a Marketing Strategy

As the team puts together an effective “see-for-yourself” marketing plan to increase awareness about organic foods -- and ultimately increase membership and volunteers at Gorman Farm -- they will need to have an understanding of the key elements of a marketing strategy. These include:

- 1. Define your product or service:** How is your product packaged? What is it that your customers are really buying? And if you offer several products, which ones are the most viable to promote?
- 2. Identify your target market:** Everyone might be a potential customer. However, your team doesn’t have the budget to market to everyone. Who is your ideal customer? Who does it make sense for you to spend your time and money promoting your service to that customer? You might define your ideal customer in terms of income, age, geographic area, number of employees, revenues, industry, etc.
- 3. Know your competition:** Even if there are no direct competitors for your service, some form of competition always exists. What is competing with the sales of your product or service? What is it and why should the potential customer spend his or her money with you instead? What is your competitive advantage or unique selling proposition?
- 4. Find a niche:** What market segment is not being served well in your market? A niche strategy allows you to focus your marketing efforts and dominate your market, even if you are a small player.
- 5. Develop awareness:** A potential client can’t purchase your product or service if they don’t know it exists. Generally a potential customer must be exposed to your product 5 to 15 times before they recall your product when the need arises. Needs often arise unexpectedly. You must stay in front of your clients consistently if they are going to remember your product when that “recall moment” occurs.
- 6. Build credibility:** Clients must have a positive disposition toward your product. Potential customers must trust your product will deliver what is promised. Often, especially with large or risky purchases, you need to give customers the opportunity to “sample”, “touch”, or “taste” the product in some way.
- 7. Be Consistent:** Be consistent in everything you do. This includes the design and “look” of your collateral marketing materials, messaging, level of customer service, and product quality. Being consistent is sometimes more important than having the “best” product.

8. Maintain Focus: Focus allows more effective utilization of the scarce resources of time and money. A promotional budget offers greater return when it is used to promote a single product to a narrowly defined target market, over a continuous period of time. Before you ever consider developing a brochure, running an ad, implementing a direct mail campaign, joining an organization for networking or conducting a sales call, begin by mapping a path to success through the development of a consistent, focused marketing strategy.

The Problem

Seeing the flat or declining number of volunteers and members at Gorman Heritage Farm, Claire knows she must generate new “converts” by reaching people who may not consider organic practices as valuable to their lifestyle. Your help is needed to create a “see-for-yourself” marketing plan showing the benefits of choosing Gorman Heritage Farm’s organic vegetables and fruits over non-organic options found in the supermarket, allowing Gorman’s volunteer and membership to expand.

QUESTIONS:

Seed manufacturers change seeds genetically for various reasons. Seeds with an unknown chemical makeup are called “commercial” or “hybrid”. Seeds harvested directly from a vegetable/fruit are called “organic” or “heirloom”.

- How do organically grown vegetables compare to mass-produced products in size, plant health, output volume and speed of growth?
- Do green practices produce more nutrients?
- Why are seeds genetically modified, and how do these commercial seeds affect farming?
- Are organic or green practices more expensive for the farmer than chemical alternatives? How so? What research supports your view?
- Do commercial seeds grow faster/slower than organic/heirloom seeds?
- How do commercial non-organic vegetables differ from organic?
- Are hybrid vegetables healthier for consumption than other options? Are they endangering our health in any way? Do hybrid seeds affect the soil or harm organic seed neighbors in any way?
- Is there a “value-added” for organically grown vegetables as compared to typical mass-marketed alternatives?
- Are organic or green practices more expensive for the farmer than chemical alternatives?

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