



Study the Soil Before Planting the Crop Sound Advice for Relationship Farming

BY TERRY BROCK

Relationship marketing — which I refer to as relationship farming — involves a process that can help you operate your sales and marketing optimally. The principles of effective marketing are similar to effective farming and how a farmer begins the process which leads to harvest.

Study the Soil

Before the farmer plants the seeds, he has to study the soil. This means that the farmer has to think hard before even sowing the seeds. The successful farmer discovers what types of crops grow best in certain kinds of soil. You don't plant orange trees in Alaska and expect a great harvest. You don't plant apples in Florida expecting a record yield. You have to sow the right kinds of seeds for the soil where you farm.

This principle applies to marketing. Successful marketers find what the market is asking for now. They do their research. What are current customers asking for that they are not getting? What are they getting that can be improved or tweaked? What new, innovative products could make it based on market demand?

This is particularly important today with all the low-cost marketing tools available. It is very easy — and inexpensive — to get a blog and/or podcast going. However, producing the blog or podcast is the easy part. Marketing it is the tough part — and the most important part.

As a marketing coach, people often ask me how to get a podcast or blog going so they can “reach the world.”

When I ask them what podcasts they have listened to or what blogs they have read, they get that stunned look on their face. They often have never even listened to a podcast, let alone followed a few over a few weeks to get a feel for what the podcast world is like and what is already out there. They often don't read blogs and have little, if any, knowledge of what is already being done in the marketplace. Producing a blog or podcast without testing the market would be like a farmer planting seeds on what he “feels” the market wants versus diligent, proper study of existing conditions.

Much like a student working on a Ph.D., you have to study the literature first. Know what is already being done and said. This is studying the soil. Know what exists before you begin. Find the demand before producing your blog or podcast.

Once you know the “lay of the land,” you'll be much better able to market on the land. Get set up to listen to podcasts. Listen to several over a few weeks to understand what is being done. Read several blogs in your market to know what is available. Then find the holes. Find areas where there is a need and there is a market that is ready, willing and able to spend money for what you have. Yes,

“You don't plant orange trees in Alaska and expect a great harvest.”



TERRY BROCK

Terry Brock is a marketing coach who helps business owners market more effectively leveraging technology. He shows busy professionals how to squeeze more out of their busy days using the right rules and tools. He can be reached at **407-363-0505**, by email: terry@terrybrock.com or through his website: terrybrock.com.

you might have to acquire some new skills. Yes, you might have to get some new products or add some new lines. But, after your skill development, you'll know much more about what the market wants and can continue testing by planting seeds.

This "pre-planting" research is vital and ultimately saves you lots of time, money and effort.

Part of relationship farming is using the right tools. Here's a great tool I discovered yesterday and have used with very good results.

Actiontec MegaPlug AV 200 Adapter Kit

If you operate from a small office or home office, you probably need to connect your office computers. Connecting

them through a network can leverage your ability to collaborate, share documents, share printers and other devices and boost your productivity.

Yesterday I finally got my router repaired thanks to Bryan, my tech advisor and assistant. Once he fixed my router, I asked him to install my new MegaPlug from Actiontec. The process was as easy as the company literature said. He plugged it in and it worked! This device connects computers around my condo not through cable strung all over the place, or even via Wi-Fi, which doesn't work through some of the walls and buttresses here. It uses electrical outlets to connect to the Internet.

Two distinct benefits emerged immediately for us. One is that it really is easy.

We literally plugged it in and it played. The second was the speed we experienced consistently. We tested it at **speedtest.net** and discovered blazing speed at each location from the electrical outlets. I define "blazing" as the roughly 5.8 Mbps speed recorded. No wires strung all about. No security risk with Wi-Fi being tapped. No hassle. This is really nice!

This can be a solution for a home office which needs security, speed and ease of installation. Rather than spend \$250 an hour for a technician to install and configure your network, a \$169.99 investment for a starter 2-adapter kit MegaPlug AV 200 can get you up and running really fast. 