

South West Fairtrade day 2012 Selling Fairtrade – Challenges and Ideas

Dear All

Here is my write up of the 'selling fairtrade' workshop.

For those of you who attended this workshop last Saturday – thank you all for your excellent input. It certainly invigorated my passion for selling fair-trade and I hope many of you felt the same.

In response to requests from some of you - Jenny/Adam will be sending out follow up info from the day which will include more detail on what the mark stands for other than price and useful links to the Fairtrade foundation website.

Many thanks,

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First as a group - discussed barriers/challenges when selling fairtrade.

Key ones were:

Big brand monopoly. Advertising impact of the large unethical brands and people being unwilling to switch

Confusion about what the mark is – whether it is a brand – and maybe a specific taste. – like organic.

'I've tried fairtrade and I don't like it'!

Confusion about what the mark stands for

Confusion about non primary products eg handicrafts with different certification.

Fairtrade versus fairly traded.

Confusion about cotton and what part of the manufacturing process certification covers

Price/affordability – competing with the big buying power of supermarkets and the buy it cheap mentality of shoppers.

Convenience of buying in supermarkets

Confusion with other marks – organic, Rainforest Alliance, red tractor

Local V Fairtrade

Confidence in the mark – does the money actually reach the producer?

Barriers to sale – output from small brainstorming groups:
Each group allocated a specific barrier to discuss and come up with helpful ways to answer customer queries and practical actions sellers could take to overcome the barrier

The following is a summary:

Retailers don't always display fairtrade products clearly – need good signage and info around the product.

Maybe as sellers we should group all FT products together if we sell alongside non FT products.

The Mark is often too small. Why is it black and white on some products and coloured on other? Some customer's think the mark means something different depending on whether black and white or colour.

Assume just to fit with the colour/type of packaging – need to check this.

Confusion about what the mark stands for.

Confusion about non primary products eg handicrafts with different certification.

Fair trade versus fairly traded.

Confusion about cotton and what part of the manufacturing process certification covers – Adam covered this in the Q&A later on.

Ensure as sellers that we are gemmed up on these issues.

Make sure all clear on everything the FT mark certifies as well as price.

Ask the Fairtrade foundation if we don't know the answers.

Think of the mark as an award - given because a product has met certain environmental, social and economic standards.

Tasting is always key – tackles a lot of the barriers.

Make sure we all know the difference between the different marks – eg Fairtrade versus Rainforest Alliance.

When talking to shoppers try to get them to look at fairtrade as a holistic purchasing decision rather than compartmentalising it – eg buy FT bananas, tea, coffee and choc but nothing else.

Trade not aid but still good to build on charity images that move people to give money – walking miles for water, children working on the land and not going to school. This is a way of helping the same issues every time you go out shopping. And even better that its trade not aid.

FT mark – not a taste – it is on a wide variety of different products and brands it is not related to taste – eg when Cadburys went FT the taste didn't change.

However, it is a mark of quality so it should taste great!

If tried a FT product – eg coffee and not liked it – try another brand. This is what you would do if you didn't like a non FT product.

Different aspects of the mark will appeal to different values.
When talking to people tap into their particular concern - eg the environment
and promote this aspect of fairtrade
Be yourself and friendly.
Don't over preach
Good conversation opener – what can you see in the FT mark?
See where your customers are on the learning curve when engaging with
them.

Price – if a little more than a non FT product.
Have to compare with a quality product as the FT mark is a mark of quality.
We may pay a few extra pence – a very tiny amount of our food budget. But
this extra money is life changing for a developing world farmer living on the
poverty line.

Have a quiz at events – a good way to test peoples knowledge and highlight
different points – makes people focus on the issues.

Buying local – in many products we don't produce enough in this country for
our needs – eg honey. So FT can compliment this.
If people buy from you as an independent trader – they are keeping money
local rather than spending in the supermarkets.

Money getting to the producer – The process is well audited by the FT
foundation. Technology used to reduce fraud – eg monies paid direct to
producers via mobile phones.

Make the producer link real.
At events/on stalls display producer stories.
Traidcraft have a speaker network
Organise a producer to come to your village/town

Request to ask Mary Portis to do a show on re-vamping a FT shop – pass this
onto the FT foundation.

Each break out group also addressed either product, price, promotion or place.

Discussed what is currently working for them and what isn't.

Then brainstorm tips, ideas and actions everyone could try.

The following is a summary:

Products

- Competing against big shops on tea and coffee very difficult. Maybe focus on other products not so widely sold in bigger shops – eg rice and dried fruit Or focus on niche tea and coffee brands that the big shops aren't interested in but the discerning buyer would be interested in.
- Do tastings
- Sell at wholesale discount in bulk to schools, local businesses, youth groups etc – smaller margin but bigger sale. Also will be selling direct from the stock room so reducing shelf space needed.
- Café and products for sale combination works well.
- Make sure getting best deal from suppliers
- Bundle products together – eg cake ingredients, party bags, school lunches or make up hampers. Sometimes easier and better margin than selling individual products
- Focus on what is new to the market as point of interest.

Pricing

- Introductory offer so people see if they like the taste.
- Do ad hoc special offers/promotions
- Offer bulk buy discounts
- Free gifts if buy over a certain amount

Promotion

- How to get shoppers to engage when running a stall? May feel they are going to be trapped in a lengthy conversation if they talk to you.
- Make sure there are easy quick buys available - choc a good pull or 'pocket money' gifts.
- Must have a professional looking display as people can often perceive Ft to be a bit 'hippy'
- Need to inspire people to buy with your info an display

- Different aspects of the mark means you can tap into different agendas
- Do joint events, ventures etc with environmental or food groups. This shares the work and the promotion.
- Make general linkages in your community with other local groups – could provide them with refreshment supplies at a discount.
- Link with keep local campaigns – shop with small independent shops versus supermarkets. This could also alter the conversation you have with people rather than just talking about ethics could focus on keeping money local.

- Use your shop window as effectively as possible.
Use it to educate - maybe moving screens?

- Have stalls elsewhere to advertise your shop.

- Hold an event in your shop to get people who have not been in before to take a look. Or use the event to advertise new products to your customers.
- Have a stall on the pavement outside your shop or an A frame poster as advertising.
- Always have tasting.

- With schools/local groups – do a treasure hunt – so they have to go in your and other local shops and answer questions on what you sell and why. Good if do with primary schools as they will have to do it with their parents.

- Encourage local events to be Ft and supply the food and drink. FT pancake race?
- Sell alongside another service or product so get a target group of people – eg coffee mornings.

- Organise a barista Competition
- Rich man/poor man idea where have a raffle and either win rice or wine/choc. Can also have meals along this theme.
- Host FT parties. Could use similar format to pampered chef, Jamie oliver etc but sell FT goods.

- Fairtrade coffee mornings/sell fairtrade cakes – provide recipes and then sell the ingredients.

- Always maximise sales to existing customers – less effort than gaining new.

- FT foundation website – have materials you can customise – window stickers, A5 flyers, 3 fold leaflet and also have a bank of photos to use in promo materials.

Place/where we sell

- Some places where we have a stall are not good for immediate sale but good for getting known or getting info out there – have to weigh up this decision
- What you want to get back from a stall will also depend on whether doing FT commercially or not.
- Some functions you just need to be there so fairtrade has a presence.
- Don't carry on doing a stall in a place that doesn't work – just out of habit.
- Have drop in coffee mornings with a fairtrade focus.
- Very difficult to get businesses to use FT in coffee machines as have long term contracts with suppliers – best to focus on businesses that don't have coffee machines and offer them a good bulk buy deal.
- Empty shops. Could agree a short term let with the landlord – no rates payable. Rent may also be being paid by previous occupier under their contract – maybe left before the contract ended. Could open for 6 weeks leading up to Christmas?
- Could rent shelves in a local gallery, café, shop where the owner doesn't want to deal with another supplier. – you could supply on more favourable terms.