



# CUSTOMER INSIGHTS & MARKETING

FOR YOUR EMERGING FARM

ERIKA TEBBENS, DIRECTOR OF IMPACT



# WE KNOW LOCAL FOOD.

Taste the Local Difference<sup>®</sup> is a local food marketing agency specializing in effective strategies for agriculture, food, and beverage producers.

We believe in uplifting these purpose-driven and passionate entrepreneurs to tell their stories, find loyal customers, and build successful, well-connected businesses.



# ERIKA TEBBENS

DIRECTOR OF IMPACT

- 20 years experience running businesses
- Expert in sales and marketing for micro enterprises; worked with 100s of entrepreneurs on sustainable growth strategies
- Former farmer and beekeeper
- Food access advocate
- Local food enthusiast

# WE'LL COVER

- How to use customer insights to plan for expansion
- Why it's crucial to use your own data and review it first, before planning growth
- How to research growth paths strategically before investing in new marketing, systems, or staff
- Marketing & sales essentials that support scaling
- Questions & Resources



# GROWTH PLANNING

Before you make growth decisions, it's important to review your numbers to make data-driven decisions. You want to audit your sales data first.

## WHAT TO REVIEW

- Sales channels - farmers market, farm stand, CSA, etc.
- Sales per sales channel
- Margin per sales channel
  - NOTE: be sure to include additional costs associated with each sales channel
  - Examples: transportation, packaging, staff, fees

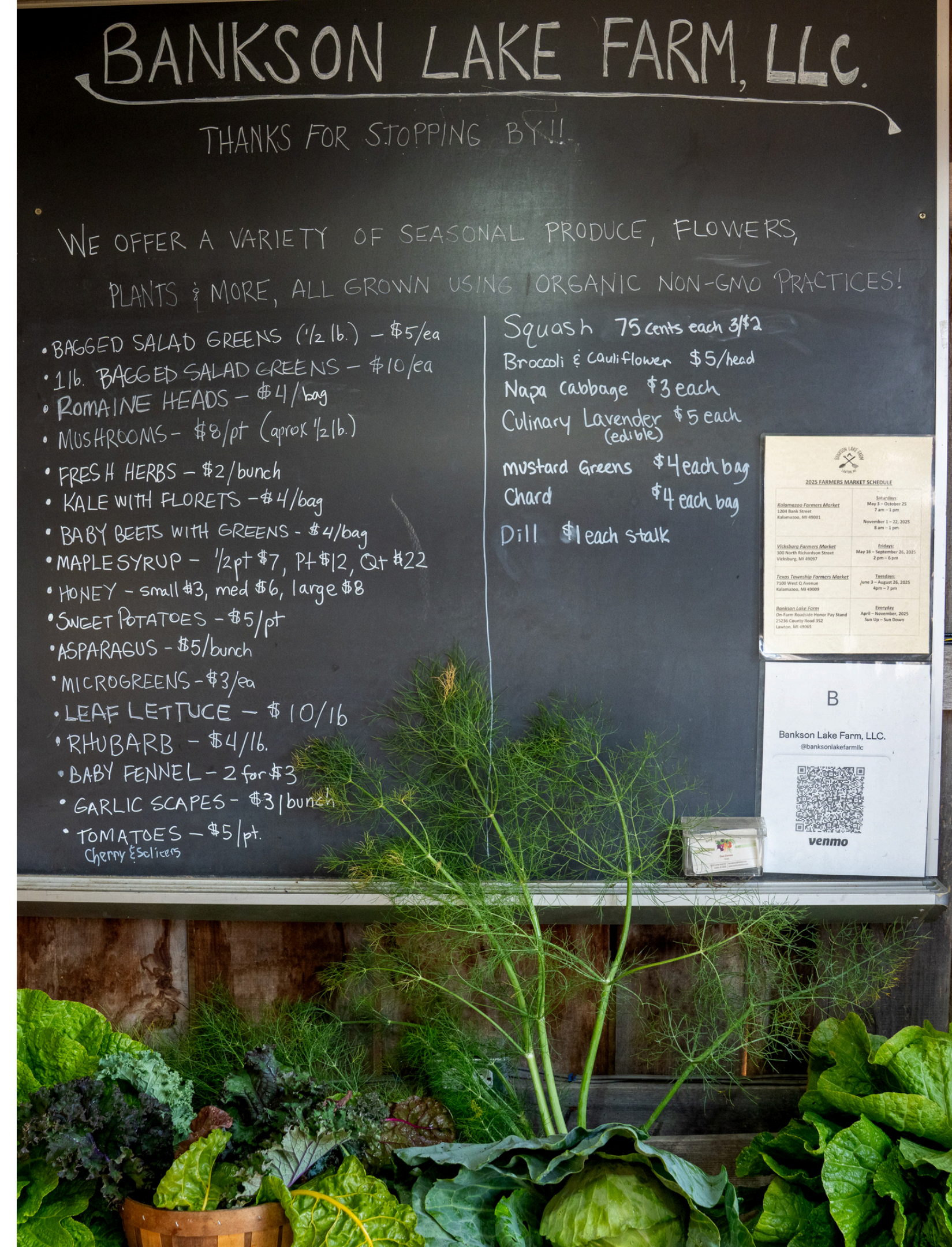


# GROWTH PLANNING

Let's go beyond the numbers too. What is your vision and purpose?

## OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Team size and capacity
- Your desire for leadership
- How you want your weeks to look
- Emotional/mental load; your personality
- Additional supplies and systems needed for different types of scaling



# DOUBLE DOWN ON WHAT WORKS

## THINK OF YOUR RAVING FANS

- Write down everything you can think of about them
- Then note what they have in common

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How did they learn about you?
- What do they purchase & how often?
- Do their overlapping qualities put them into one Ideal Customer Profile or two?



# CUSTOMER SURVEYS

Don't hesitate to send a survey when it makes sense.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Try to keep surveys concise and specific.
- You'll need to send reminders.
- You don't need to send surveys to everyone if you're only trying to figure out info on certain aspects of your business.



TorchLake.coop

## Torch Lake Co-op Customer Survey

Welcome!

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete our Torch Lake Co-op Customer Survey. Whether you're a longtime supporter or just discovering us, your input helps us improve how we serve the community. This survey will help us better understand your shopping habits, experience with our website, and what matters most to you when it comes to local food.

It should take about 5-7 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous unless you choose to enter your contact info at the end to receive updates and receive one free delivery. We appreciate your time and your support of local farmers and food producers. Let's dig in!

\* Indicates required question

What's your ZIP code? \*

Do you live in the area: \*

Year Round

Seasonally

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Which best describes you? (Check all that apply) \*

Working full-time

Retired

Parent or caregiver

Home cook or meal planner

Enjoys entertaining and hosting

Visiting the area

Gardener

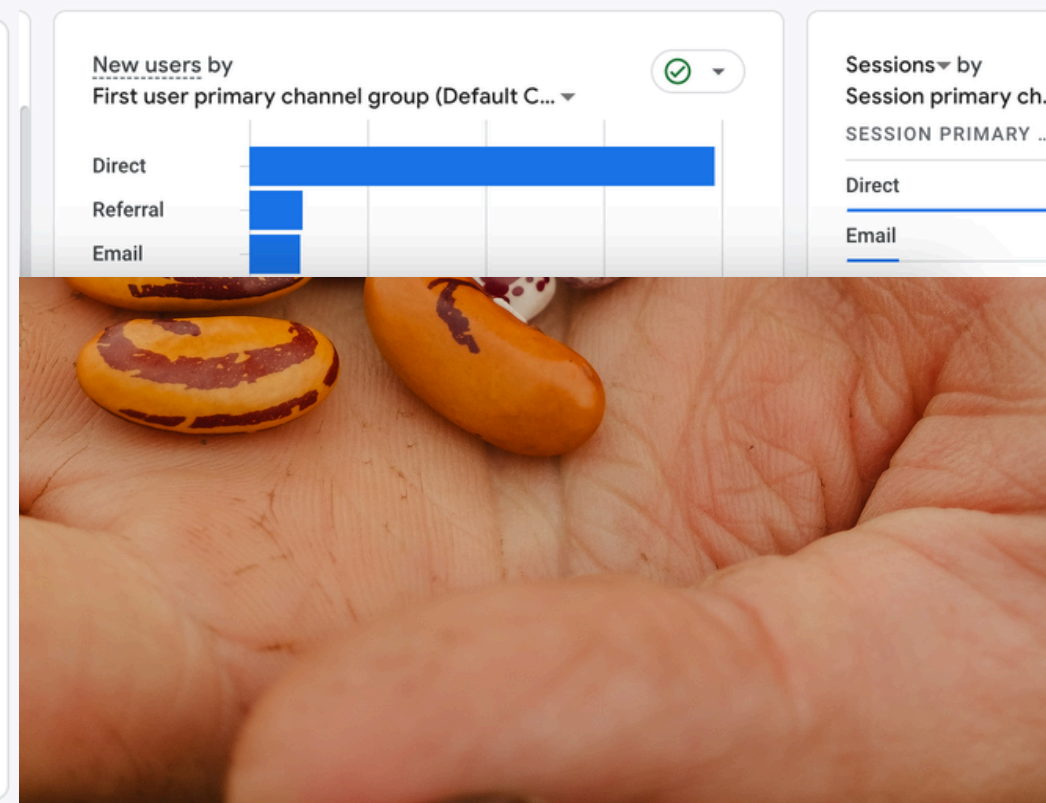
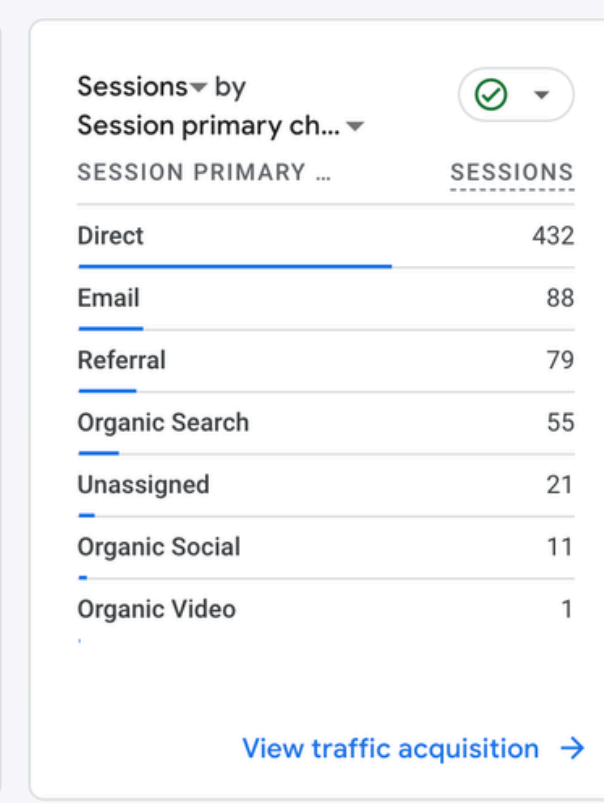
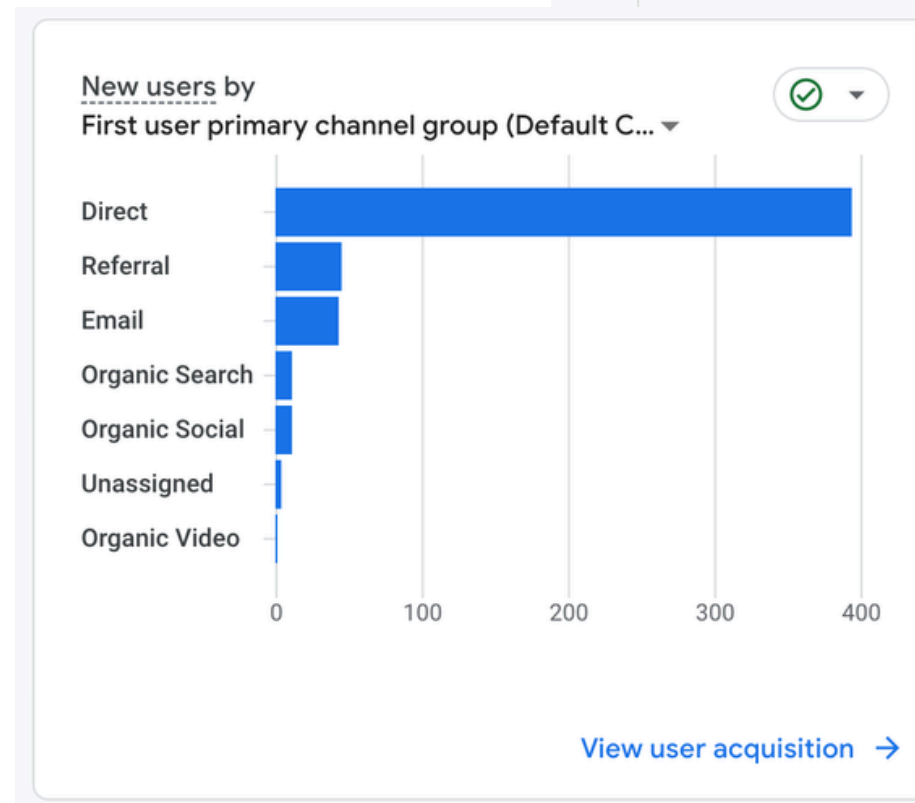
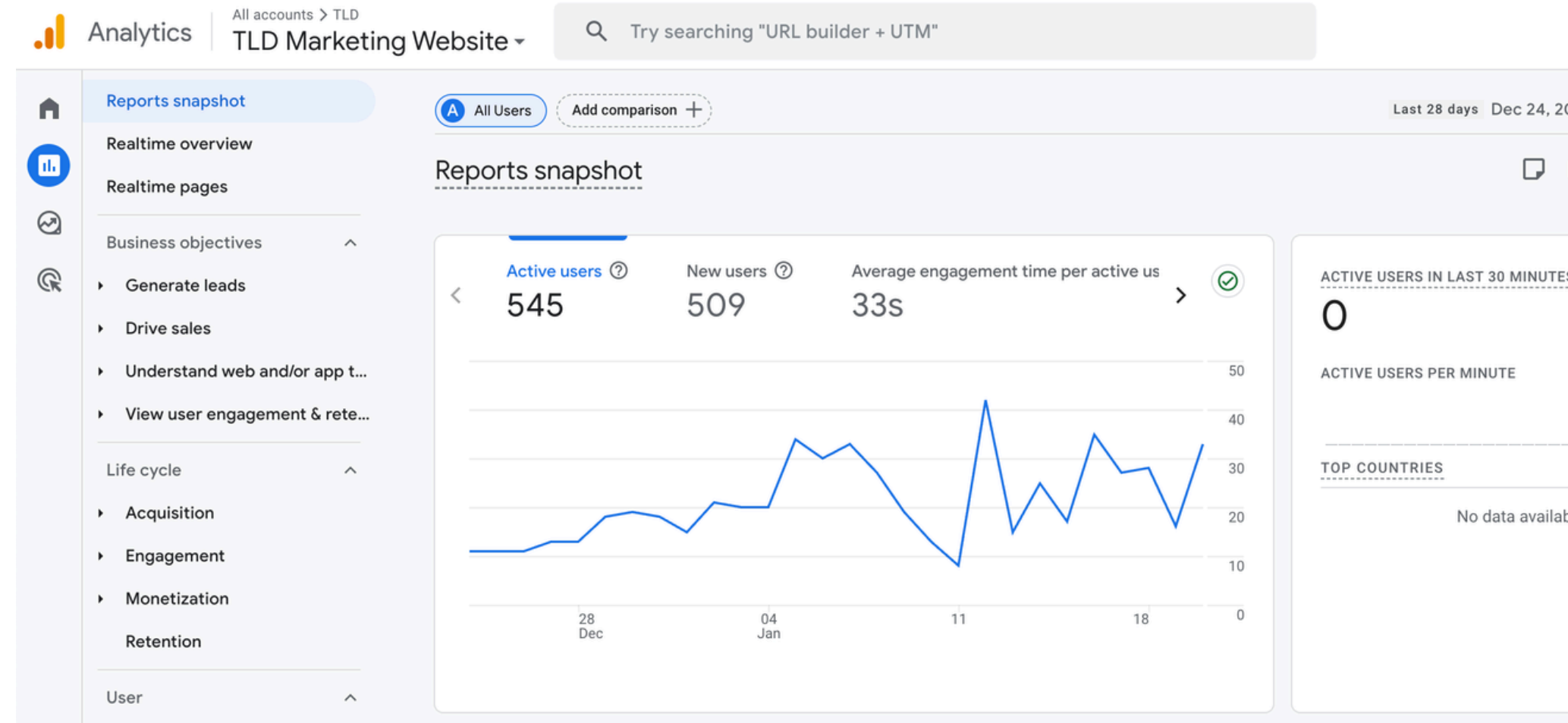
Living on a fixed income

Prefer not to say

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

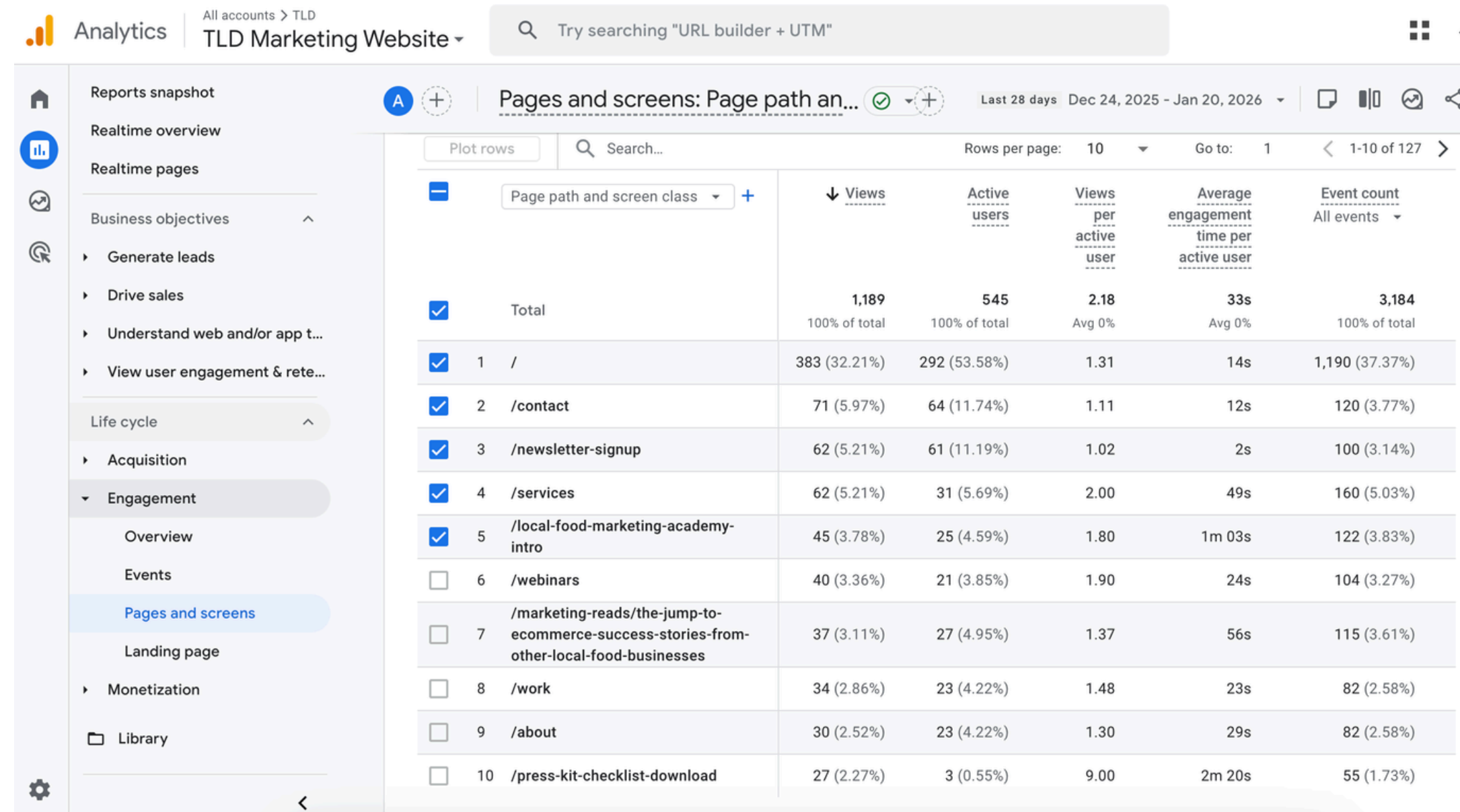
# GOOGLE ANALYTICS DASHBOARD

- Callouts:
  - Users
  - Sessions
  - Engagement time
  - Traffic sources
- Set up resource



# A FEW METRICS TO START WITH

1. Users – how many people visit
2. Sessions – how often they come
3. Traffic source – where they come from
4. Top pages – what they see most
5. Engagement time – how long they stay



The screenshot shows the Google Analytics interface for 'TLD Marketing Website'. The main view is 'Pages and screens: Page path an...'. The table displays performance metrics for various pages and screens over the last 28 days (Dec 24, 2025 - Jan 20, 2026). The metrics include Views, Active users, Views per active user, Average engagement time per active user, and Event count.

	Page path and screen class	Views	Active users	Views per active user	Average engagement time per active user	Event count
	Total	1,189 (100% of total)	545 (100% of total)	2.18 (Avg 0%)	33s (Avg 0%)	3,184 (100% of total)
1	/	383 (32.21%)	292 (53.58%)	1.31	14s	1,190 (37.37%)
2	/contact	71 (5.97%)	64 (11.74%)	1.11	12s	120 (3.77%)
3	/newsletter-signup	62 (5.21%)	61 (11.19%)	1.02	2s	100 (3.14%)
4	/services	62 (5.21%)	31 (5.69%)	2.00	49s	160 (5.03%)
5	/local-food-marketing-academy-intro	45 (3.78%)	25 (4.59%)	1.80	1m 03s	122 (3.83%)
6	/webinars	40 (3.36%)	21 (3.85%)	1.90	24s	104 (3.27%)
7	/marketing-reads/the-jump-to-ecommerce-success-stories-from-other-local-food-businesses	37 (3.11%)	27 (4.95%)	1.37	56s	115 (3.61%)
8	/work	34 (2.86%)	23 (4.22%)	1.48	23s	82 (2.58%)
9	/about	30 (2.52%)	23 (4.22%)	1.30	29s	82 (2.58%)
10	/press-kit-checklist-download	27 (2.27%)	3 (0.55%)	9.00	2m 20s	55 (1.73%)

# WHAT MIGHT NEED TO GO?

Sometimes before growth, we need to prune. What might need to get scaled back, outsourced, or stopped entirely?

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are there unprofitable crops/market channels/offers?
- Are there customers you've been trying to appease, but it's taking more effort than you get back?
- Is there a task it's time to admit needs to be handled by someone else?

## Good news!

Now that you have clarity, you can start making a plan.



# FARMER EXAMPLE

Bailey Samp and John Dindia of Lakeview Hill Farm had to make strategic changes in order to grow.

**FROM ORGANIC GROWER MAGAZINE, SPRING 2026:**

“Grocers are reliable, consistent and predictable,” Dindia said.

Grocers also want reliability, consistency and predictability, as well as safe produce for their customers. A local brand with UPC codes (Universal Product Code) helps ensure both reliability and traceability.

Opening the market meant changes in production.

“We stopped growing some crops,” Dindia said, “and started buying from other farmers.”

*Image from the article, provided by Lakeview Hill Farm*



# MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS

## BUDGET:

- Ideally it's a percentage that can grow with you.
- Think of it like risk management.
- Treat it as a non-negotiable for growth.

## ESSENTIALS:

- Professionally Designed Brand Kit
- Website (optimized for mobile); possibly with eCommerce
- Good quality photos
- Email marketing software (if doing any email marketing)
- Claim social media handles & fill in info (even if you don't plan to post there)



**NOW WE CAN START  
STRATEGIZING GROWTH!**



# WHOLESALE CLIENT

The ideal client for wholesale relationships should be defined separately from the ideal consumer client.

## ORDERING BEHAVIORS

- How often do they order?
- What quantities do they accept?
- Do they have packaging requirements?
- What is their wholesale process?
- What are their payment terms?

*Ask these questions of ~10 businesses across different categories like institutions, schools, retail, restaurants, etc.*



# CUSTOMER RESEARCH

## BEST PRACTICES

- Don't reach out during peak busy times.
- Connect with the person who makes purchasing decisions.
- Make sure your values align.
- Be realistic about what you can provide.
- Don't be afraid to negotiate and keep asking questions.

*Now you can create Ideal Client Profiles for the types of wholesale buyers you want to market & sell to.*



# PRO TIP

As you do research and outreach, go back and utilizing your Ideal Customer Profile(s) and data to highlight to potential wholesale accounts why partnering with you is a win-win!



# WHY MARKETING MATTERS WHEN SCALING

## CONSIDERATIONS

- Buyers look for consistency, professionalism, and trust
- Strong branding communicates product quality before they even taste it
- Marketing systems save you time and make ordering easier for buyers (big win)

*Think of your marketing as part of your product. It should reflect the same care and craftsmanship.*



LAKEVIEW HILL FARM

USDA ORGANIC

ORGANIC

# ARUGULA

Locally Grown in Traverse City

PRE-RINSED & READY TO ENJOY

lakeviewhillfarm.com

5 oz.

Certified Organic by NICS Grown at 8608 E. Lakeview Hills Road, Traverse City, MI

POST-CONSUMER RECYCLED

8 50016 69902 2

NATURAL • RELAXED • HAPPY

Our Berkshire Hogs are raised outdoors on pasture with wild forage, free-range eggs, apples, garden veggies and grain feed which means higher levels of vitamins and other nutrients for you.

LOCAL WHISPERING WILD MARKET FARM

LOCAL HERB SUSTAINABLE

### PASTURED PORK PRICE LIST

Smoked Bacon (natural cure)	.....\$12/lb
Natural Cure Jowl Bacon	.....\$9/lb
Fresh Polish Sausage Link	.....\$9/lb
Smoked Hocks	.....\$5/lb
Boneless Pork Roast	.....\$8/lb
Butt Roast	.....\$8/lb
Picnic Roast	.....\$8/lb
Fresh Ham Roast	.....\$7.5/lb
Natural Cure Smoked Ham Roast	.....\$8.5/lb
Neck Bones	.....\$3/lb
Lard	.....\$4/lb

### LAMB PRICE LIST

Leg of lamb (bone-in)	.....\$17/lb
Lamb Roast (bone-in)	.....\$17/lb
Rib Chops	.....\$18.5/lb
Loin Chops	.....\$20.5/lb
Shoulder steaks	.....\$18/lb
shanks	.....\$9/lb
Bones	.....\$5/lb
Stew meat	.....\$15/lb
Ground Lamb	.....\$16/lb

### CONTACT US

whisperingwildmarketfarm@gmail.com  
520-850-0854

• Contact us to get on our waiting list for our seasonally sold half or whole pork shares •

# MATCHING YOUR BRAND TO YOUR BUYERS

- Identify your ideal wholesale partners before investing heavily in packaging
- Tailor your packaging and marketing tone to match their expectations (without sacrificing yours)
- Think: “What would make MY product stand out on THEIR shelf?”



# PACKAGING THAT SELLS

## CONSIDERATIONS

- Packaging should align with your target market and sales outlets
- Consider cost, ROI, and how quickly you'll recoup the investment
- Source packaging first, then work with a designer experienced in packaging design

## GO ALL IN

*Include supporting visuals like shelf talkers, bottle tags, or display graphics - small details that drive in-store sales.*



# MARKETING ASSETS


## SALES ASSET CONSIDERATIONS

- Pitch email templates (branded)
- Sell sheets
- Contract templates/DocuSign platform
- Invoicing system
- Delivery system

Have everything ready to go for pitching new accounts and getting contracts signed quickly.

## SELL SHEET PRO TIP

*Make room for important information, but ALSO make it visually appealing by applying your branding - logos, font, colors, and photos if possible.*



**NATURAL • RELAXED • HAPPY**

Our Berkshire Hogs are raised outdoors on pasture with wild forage, free-range eggs, apples, garden veggies and grain feed which means higher levels of vitamins and other nutrients for you.

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# WHAT'S IN A PITCH

## INCLUDE (& KEEP IT BRIEF)

1. Short intro & farm bio
2. Benefits - What's in it for them?
3. Proof - testimonials, other data
4. Features - specific info
5. Next Steps - clear call to action

## OPTIONAL, BUT GOOD

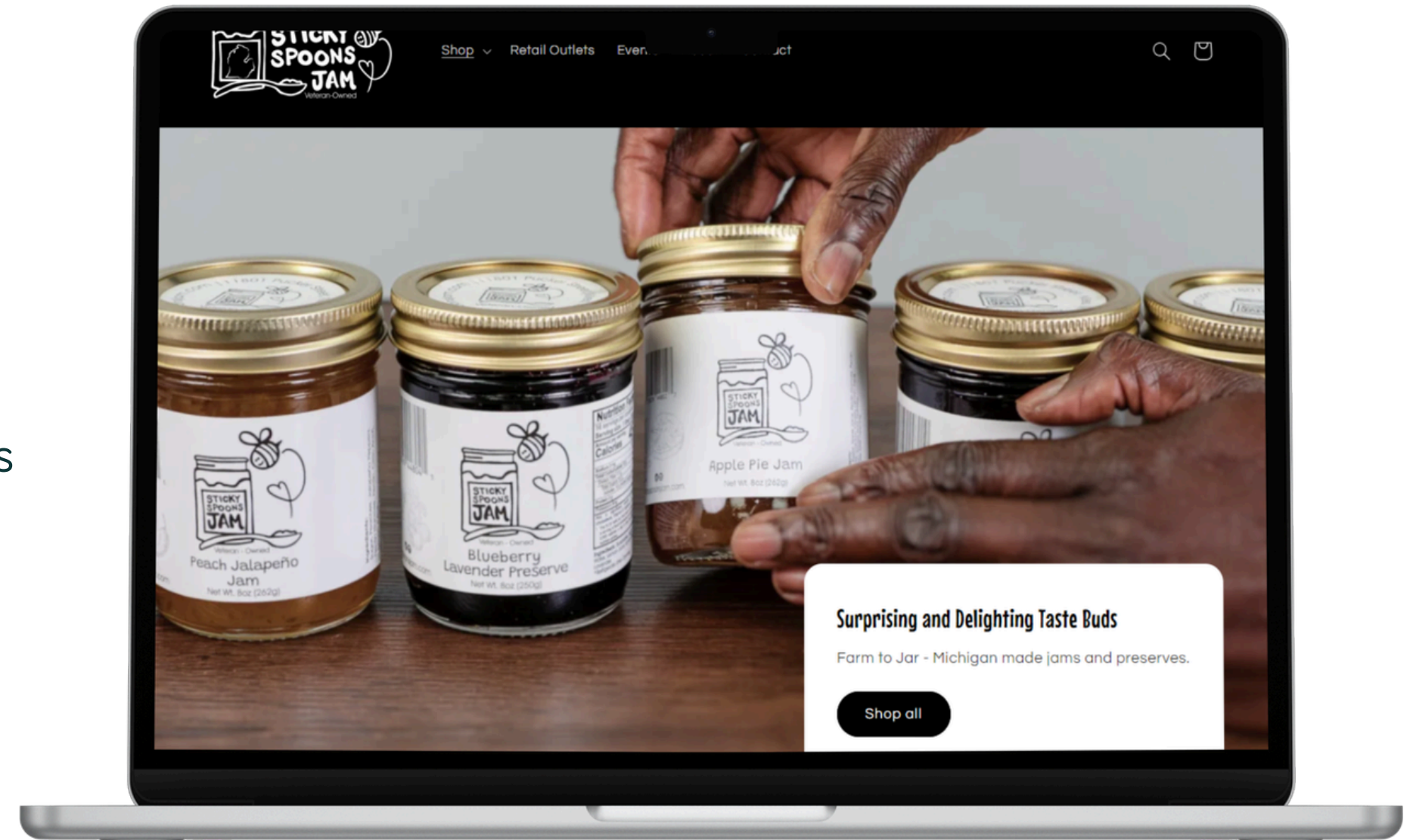
- Have a branded email template or signature
- Include a branded sell sheet
- Eliminate back-and-forth with a call calendar or limited time/date call options



# YOUR WEBSITE AS A TRUST BUILDER

## CONSIDERATIONS

- A user-friendly, branded website builds credibility
- Include wholesale information and clear product descriptions
- eCommerce integration simplifies reorders and increases efficiency



*Use your website as a digital “showroom” - it should make buyers feel confident in your professionalism and reliability.*

# CASE STUDY: STICKY SPOONS JAM



**AIYE AKHIGBE**

- 
- Nigeria → Niles
  - Jam Maker/Navy Veteran
  - Sources 95% of fruits from small family-owned farms within a 30-mile radius

*"I know I can purchase less expensive fruit from other states for jam production, but nothing tastes better than a Michigan peach. Nothing tastes better than a Michigan strawberry. We are committed to working with families that are involved in keeping agriculture alive in Southwest Michigan."*

*- Aiye, MEDC article*

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**AIYE AKHIGBE**



Supports packaging and product testing



Awarded funding through FoodSPICE (Food Systems Partners Investing in Communities and Entrepreneurs)

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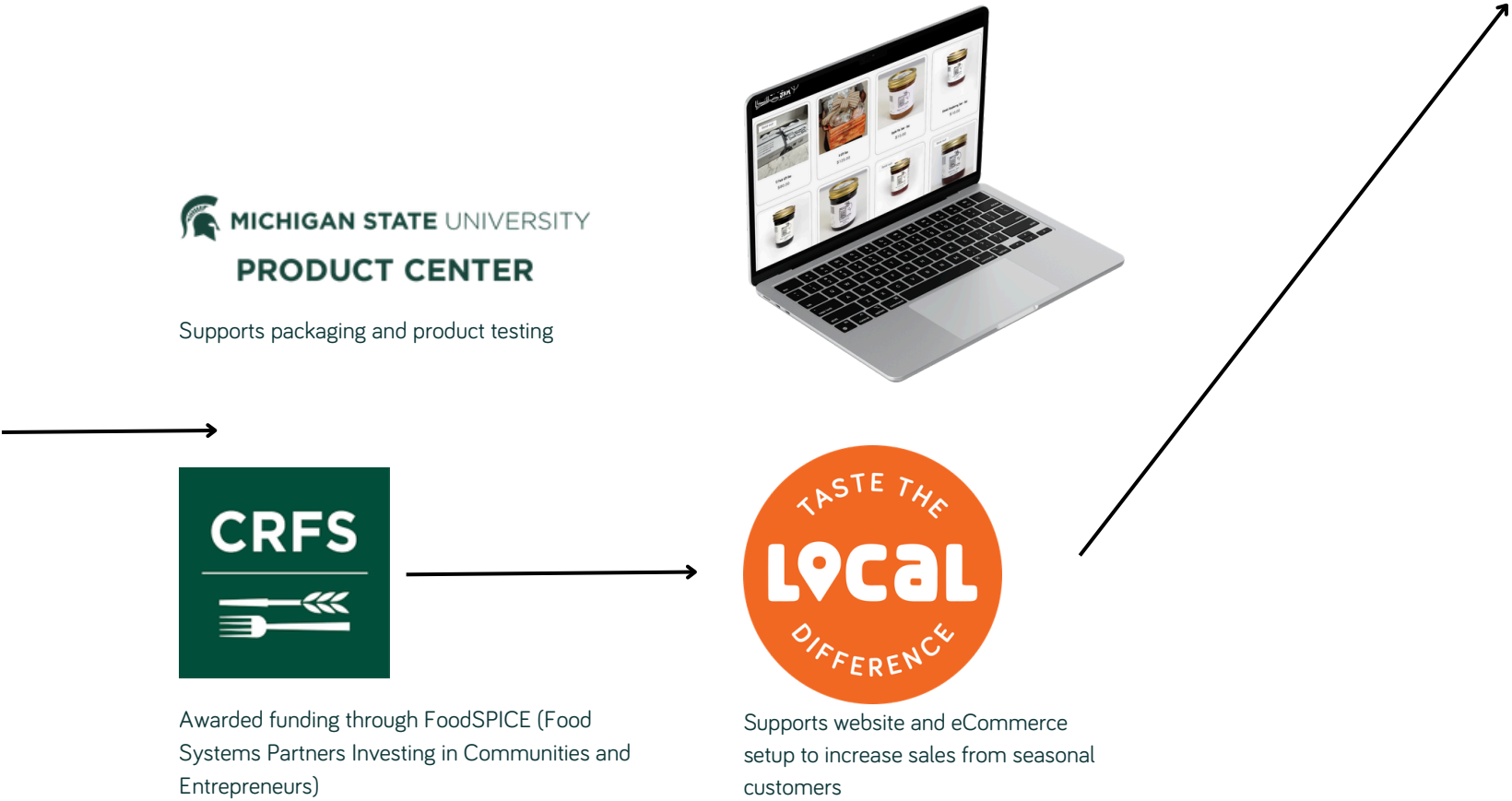
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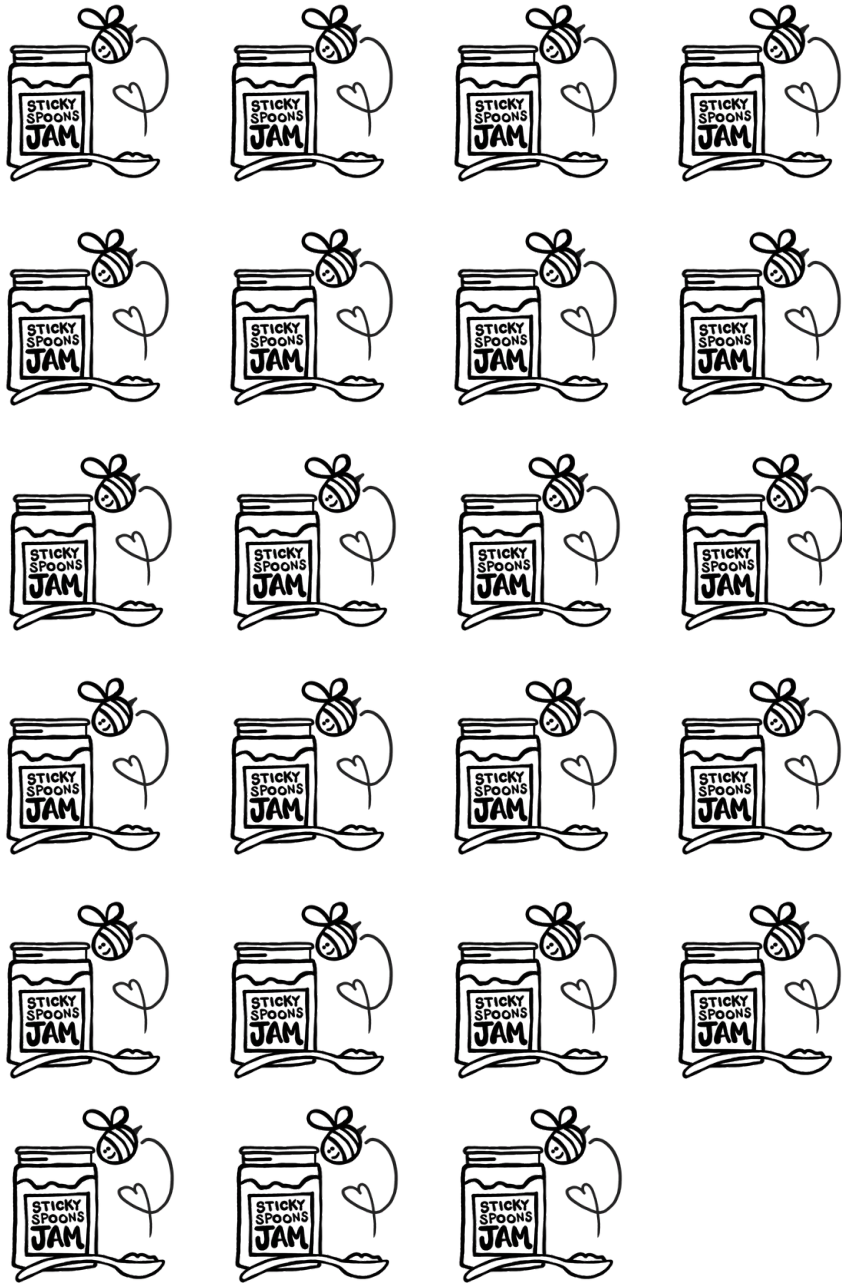
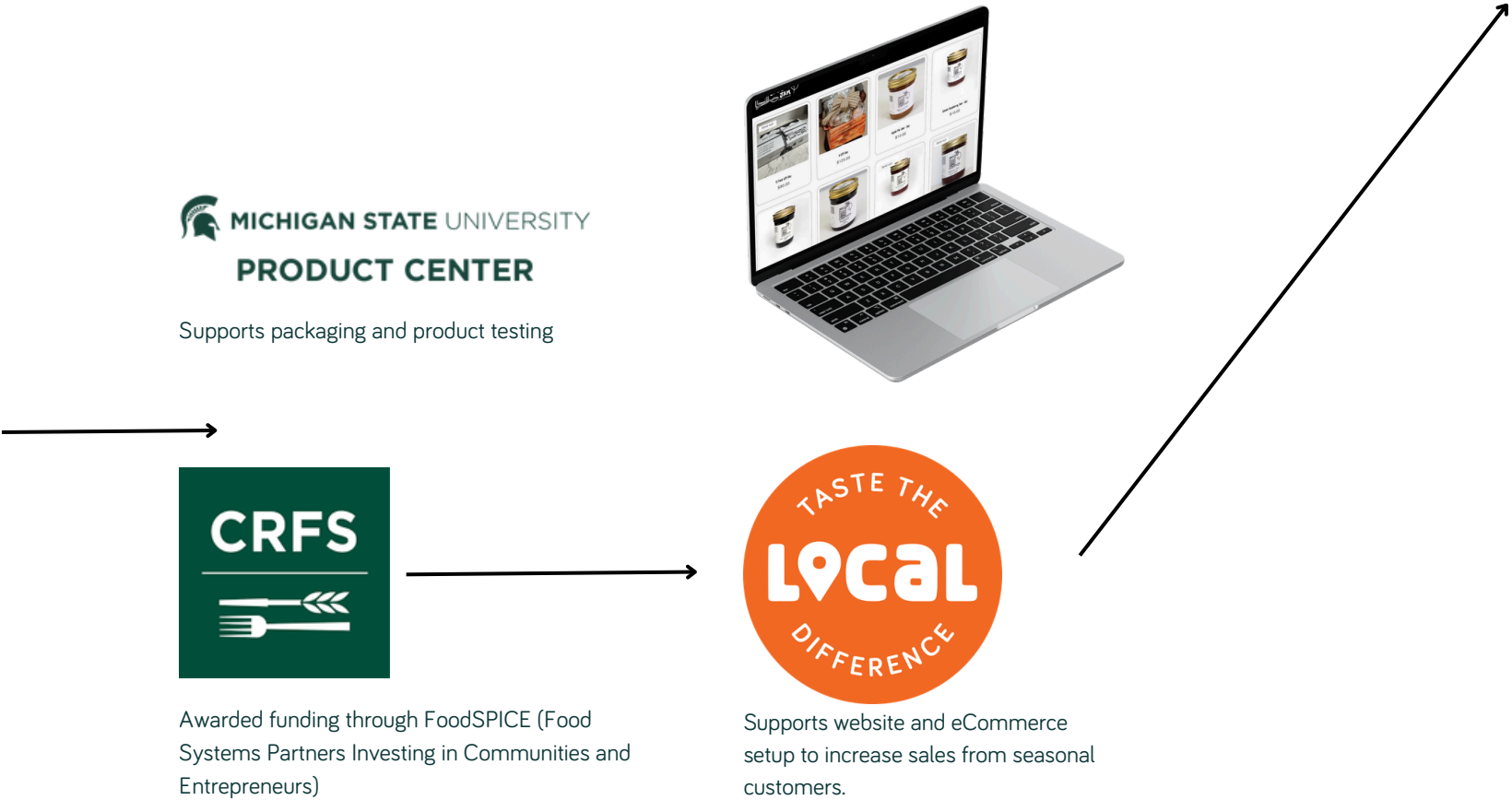


After launching the new site, Aiye goes from **7 Wholesale Accounts** to...

# CASE STUDY: STICKY SPOONS JAM



AIYE AKHIGBE



## 23 Wholesale Accounts

Wholesale accounts can reorder easily because they see Aiye's inventory in real-time

# CASE STUDY: STICKY SPOONS JAM



AIYE AKHIGBE



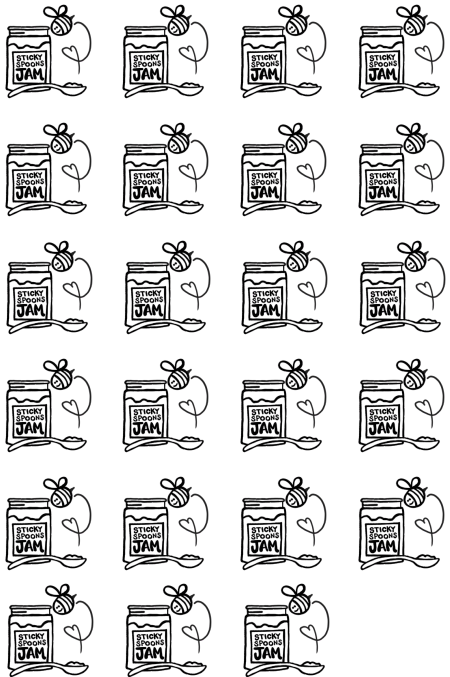
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Which means Aiye is spending less time on admin tasks like processing orders and answering FAQs

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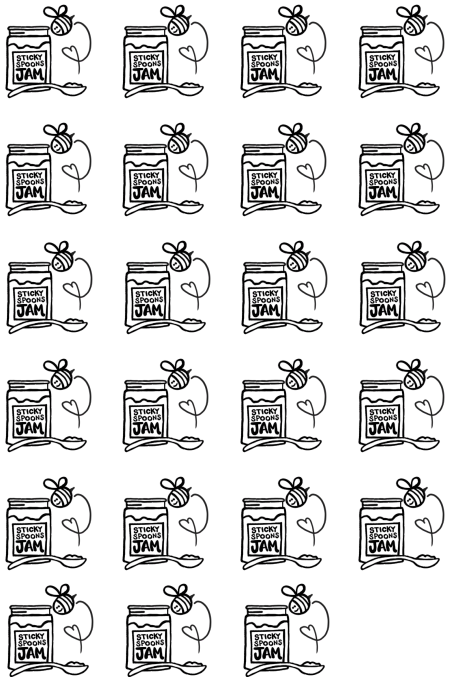
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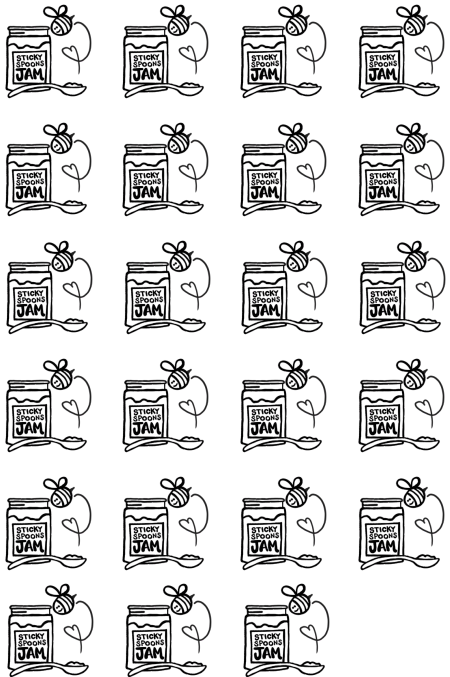
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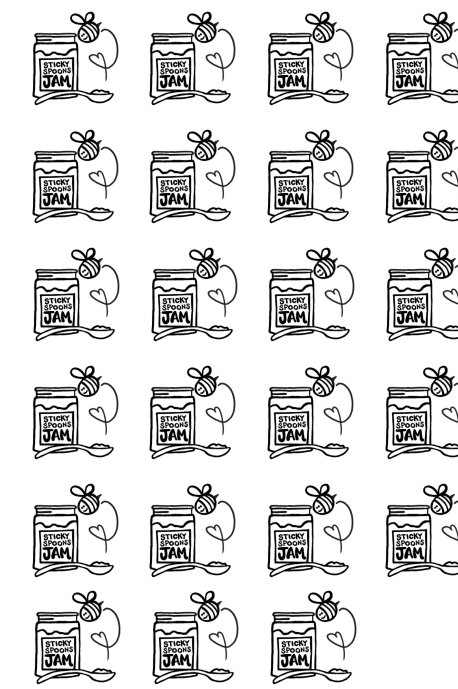
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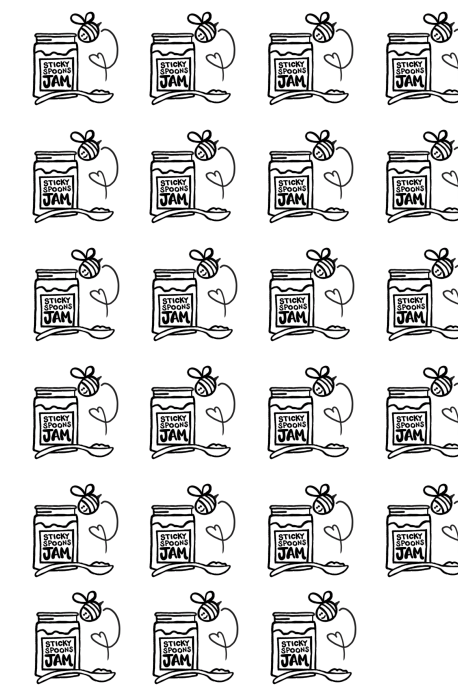
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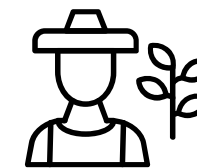
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 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
PRODUCT CENTER

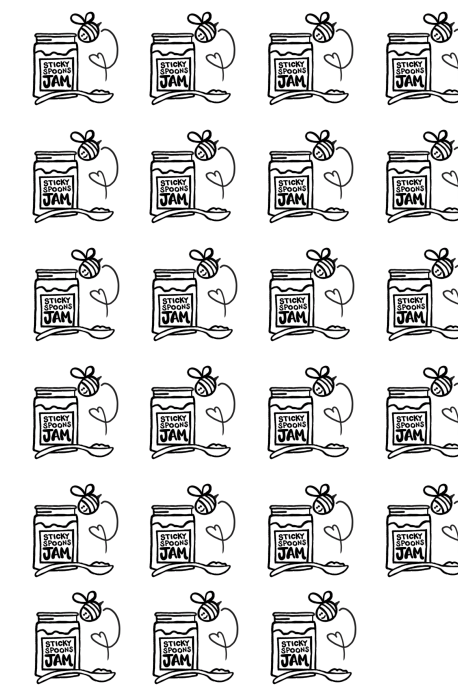
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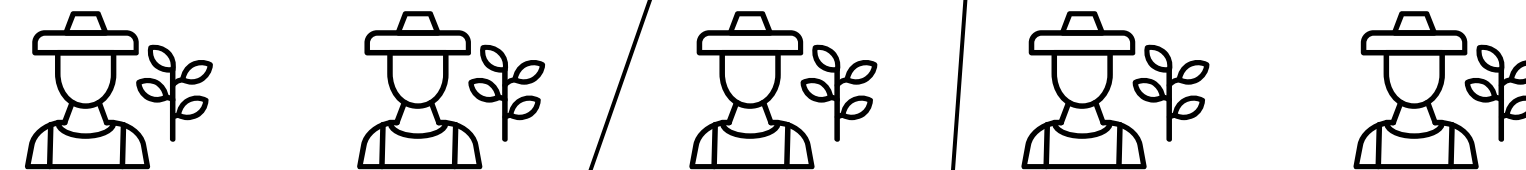
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And invest time into more creative collaborations with local breweries, tea companies, restaurants, and retailers

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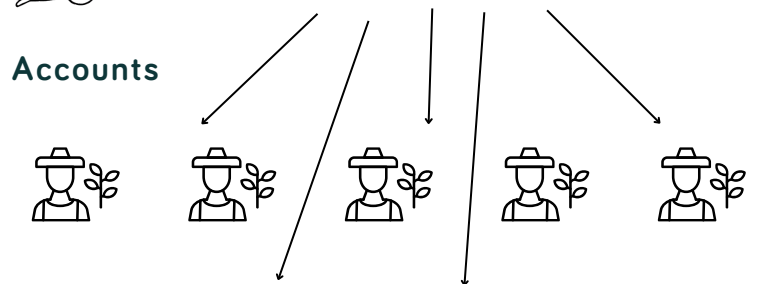
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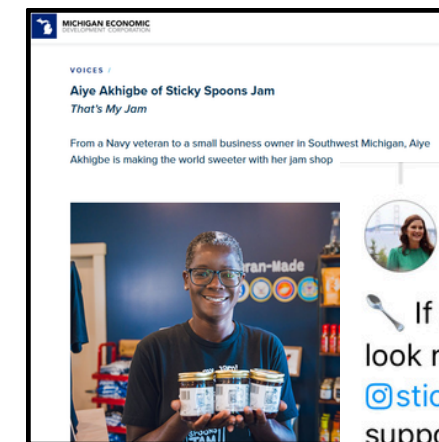


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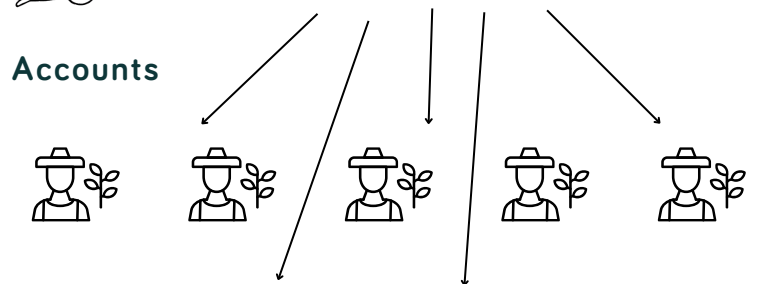
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Which was noticed by the Governor



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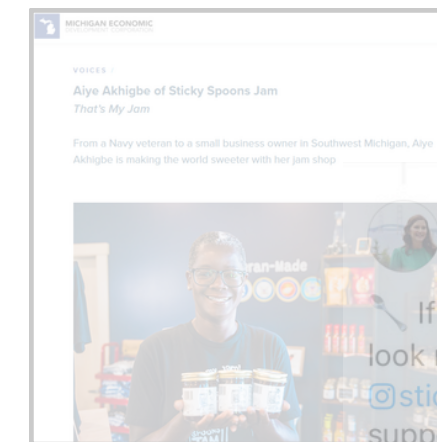


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gewhitmer • 2h  
If you're looking for a sweet treat or a perfect gift, look no further than local businesses like @stickyspoonsjam in Niles. Businesses like theirs are supporting good-paying jobs in their communities and sharing locally grown produce that's sure to be the highlight of your holidays.



## AND THE CYCLE REPEATS!

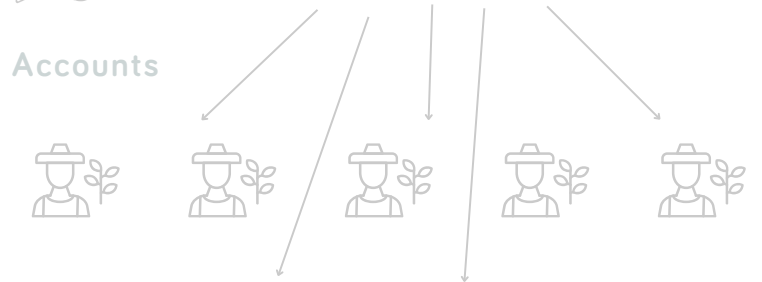
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Consequently, Sticky Spoons Jam reports a **20% increase in revenue** launching the website.

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Increased production means... Aiye gets to purchase more produce from local farmers to make their products.

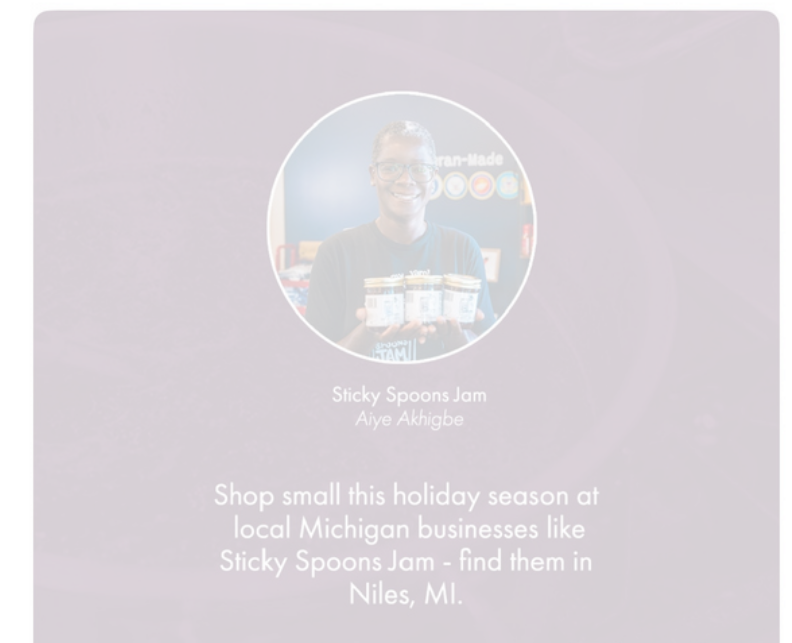
**23 Wholesale Accounts**



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Increasing visibility and sales for Aiye



# SECURE ONGOING REVENUE

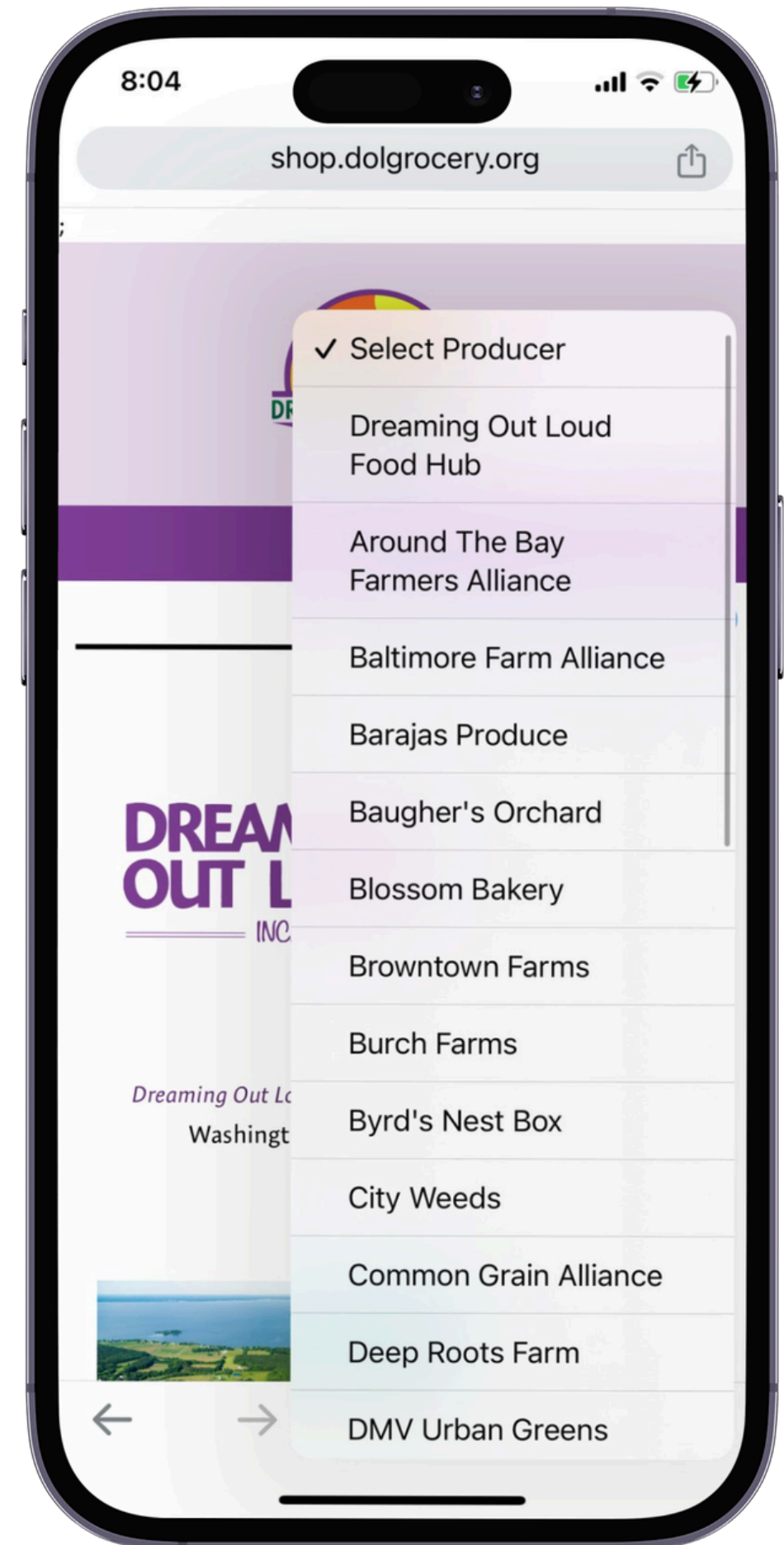
Make sure your process is sustainable for you.

## REORDERING SCHEDULE

- Determine based on production capacity
- Ask yourself:
  - Can people reorder anytime or only at certain times?
  - How will you communicate this?
- Using automations, like prescheduled emails, can save you time and keep communication consistent.

## SYSTEMS THAT SAVE YOU TIME

- Sync inventory across eCommerce and invoicing software
- Automate email sequences for: order confirmations and delivery reminders, reorder nudges, and seasonal promos



# YOUR SEASONAL MARKETING STRATEGY

## CONSIDERATIONS

- Plan quarterly or seasonal campaigns to align with buyer needs
- Highlight new products, limited runs, or promo windows
- Keep consistent visuals and messaging across all channels

*Build marketing timelines around your production and delivery schedules because it keeps messaging relevant and manageable.*



# NEXT STEPS

- Review your current sales data, ICP, and growth goals
- Research expansion options & decide what to start with
- Review your current brand and marketing materials
- Identify what's missing from your wholesale toolkit
- Create a short-term plan to fill those gaps before pitching

## PROCESS PRO TIP

*Start small but aim for cohesion; consistency across visuals, messaging, and systems makes you memorable and trustworthy.*





Download our Wholesale Readiness Checklist!

[LOCALFOODMARKETING.COM/MORE-RESOURCES/WHOLESALE-READINESS](https://LOCALFOODMARKETING.COM/MORE-RESOURCES/WHOLESALE-READINESS)





Want personalized marketing support for your business?

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