

Leamington workshop 22 May 2016

The Leamington workshop was a friendly, low-key affair. It was a sharing of ideas on using social media just like we plan for ourselves on June 8th. The "Art in the Park" team includes people with more extensive skills than we can muster, though, so it was instructive.

Telling a story

Several presenters emphasised that what we were selling was not just our goods but the love, care & pride that goes into them. We should have information cards with our goods that say something about who we are and what is special about our produce. One presenter, who ran a wine business, said that he spent three years trying to aggressively market his wines using Twitter & had no success. He then stopped "marketing" & used Twitter to simply describe his daily routines, delivering wines etc. (telling his story) and ironically that did build up a following & led to increase sales.

Connected with this theme we were told to never stand behind our tables, always stand in front. The table forms a barrier. People want to talk to you & hear about your produce & about you!

Playing the algorithm game

There is what is called "organic reach". This is the audience you reach without any paid for boost. Facebook (other social platforms are similar) doesn't let your posts reach as many people as you might expect from the likes you get. If you should have reached a thousand people you will only reach about 27% of that number. Oddly, if you are more successful & should reach, say, a million people the odd go down & you only reach about 2.7% of that audience.

It is not cut & dried, however. The algorithm they use gives greater importance (and reach) based on certain things. Facebook rates video higher than simple pictures. It is good to use short videos (say 20-30 seconds) where possible. We already know that "likes" & "shares" help but so do comments. If, when you share an item you also make a comment on it it further boosts the rating of the posting and so raises the percentage of its reach.

Many of our producers have their own personal Facebook page. If we could encourage as many of those as possible to like & share items from our markets business pages we could raise the reach of our postings. When customers say they would like to help this is something they could also be encouraged to do.

We were told that it is better to do one or two social media platforms well rather than try to cover all of them & doing it badly due to lack of time. Of course, if more of our producers wished to help then they could take on missing platforms (Pinterest & Instagram are recommended). With Twitter it is good to be on it frequently but with Facebook we were told that you do better posting just a few, high quality, posts each week. If you post lots of hasty items your percentage of reach actually goes down for each one.

Websites

Although the dynamism is in social media, websites are still very important as show-cases of who you are and what to do. It is easier to make social media & websites work together if the website has some sort of shopping element built into it.

There were a number of presenters who talked about things connected with “Art in the Park”. We also had Stacey, co-founder of networking mummies talking about that organisation (family & small business oriented, but no longer all mummies). Several people gave advice on making the best use of networking events. I think, though, that the points I’ve related above are the most relevant to our usage of social media, though & so I’ll stop here.