

# marketshare [mahr-kit shair] -noun

1. Is a program of marketumbrella.org, which works to cultivate the field of public markets for public good.
2. These free documents (called "shares") are the best of "lessons learned" from public markets everywhere.
3. Employ as needed, & please feel free to tell us about your results, so that we can share those with other markets.



## Market Day: rules, staging & reducing conflicts

Just like mounting a successful stage production, Market Day management begins weeks before your first Market and days before every subsequent Market. You, the market management, play all the roles, at least in part: producer, director, actor, and audience. You'll need to anticipate and manage risks and outcomes (produce); stage the event and instruct the vendors, shoppers and staff (direct); greet vendors and customers, introduce new people and products (act); and let others shine (be the audience). We find that we need three to eight hours of preparation for each Market and, of course, more for your very first Market. Our preparation includes calling to confirm with vendors, volunteers, and media; mapping space; and gathering supplies.

Here are **three basic rules** we keep for our markets:

1. You must grow it, catch it, or make it to sell it.
2. Show up with enough to sell for the duration of the market; no early sales or departures. (We're happy for you if you sell out early, but please stick around to tell disappointed shoppers you'll bring more next time.)
3. No surprises.

Our rules apply to management, too. We don't add resellers, or leave early, or surprise our vendors by moving them, without calling to let them know. We're there all day, rain or shine, hot or cold, working alongside the vendors.

**Welcome area.** You'll want a booth or table of your own, identified with your banner and perhaps other printed materials like information sheets, recipe cards, shopping bags, and T-shirts. You should also have information and applications on hand for prospective vendors. You might consider welcome signs and information in languages other than English. We sell coffee at our booth and have seating nearby. We always keep one staff member or volunteer stationed there to welcome customers, answer questions, and promote new products or vendors. We also recommend identifying colors or badges for staff and volunteers. We use yellow T-shirts for volunteers and lime green ones for staff.

One other key staff function that may take place at your welcome booth, depending on your Market policy, is the selling of Market tokens to enable the acceptance of credit/debit cards and EBT, or food stamps. For more information, see our EBT Primer on the website.

In addition to staff at the welcome booth, we recommend that you have one or more staff members or volunteers who circulate throughout the Market and see that everything is going smoothly and lend a hand if it is not. However, we tell our staff to limit single conversations to less than 10 minutes, and to encourage anyone who wants to talk more than that to make an appointment or call on a non-market day.

**Handling conflicts.** Lengthy conversations often revolve around a vendor issue—either a problem you’re having with them, or one they’re having with you. Never escalate conflicts at Market. Reduce tensions and keep difficult conversations for later. We have a postcard system we use to communicate with vendors, which is available for download from our website:

- Yellow asks about a surprise absence
- Pink requests information to help us explain a new product they haven’t brought before, or something they brought out of season
- Orange communicates food-handling concerns (See From the Field to the Table food handling guidelines on our website.)
- Mystery Chef reports on the results of mystery shoppers who try a product and rate it. The exercise often results in a complimentary handwritten note, which then can be displayed at table next to the product.

These postcards are sent by the market staff after the issue is noted at Market. The card asks the vendor to call the office to discuss the matter before the next Market. Copies of these postcards go in our vendor files, and large numbers of

cards result in a face-to-face meeting with the director. (NO ONE wants that!)

If an issue is so urgent that it must be discussed at the Market (an irate shopper, or a really bad vendor issue), remove yourselves from the direct sight or sound of others and talk quietly, even if others do not. State your case calmly and generously, if at all possible, maintaining eye contact and keeping your hands in your pockets or at your side, not on your hips or folded in front of you. Bring a board member with people skills or another respected vendor to mediate if possible. Tell other board members who are present what is happening before you raise the issue with the problem vendor.

Keep your grievance statement short, and let the other folks talk for the same amount of time as you. If the conversation needs to continue beyond that, make an appointment for a phone or face-to-face conversation later, but NOT directly after the Market. Allow at least a day for tempers and wounded egos to normalize before revisiting the issue again.

Sit lightly in the “management” chair. Many vendors are older, with more business experience, than staff. Shoppers, too, may have more experience with the Market than a relatively new staff member. Don’t take abuse, but be respectful at all times and you will earn others’ respect, even if they disagree with you.

**What about paid staff?** Although it is possible to run a Market utilizing only volunteers on Market Day, this is the exception, rather than the rule. We have found paid staff to be indispensable for the ongoing tasks of:

- “Curating” the Market, which is the capacity that will continue to attract shoppers over time and through the vagaries of popular tastes.
- Addressing the concerns of vendors, who will periodically have issues
- Marketing the Market
- Complying municipality regulations
- Responding to neighbors, shoppers, and media concerns and inquiries.

offer shoppers value they can’t get anywhere else. Whether that means fresher, local produce; unusual items like heirloom or baby varieties of produce; good prices; free samples; or a nourishing sense of community, your success depends on knowing what shoppers value in your Market and keeping it coming. We have found that our success also increases when we are able to make all our constituents—vendors, shoppers, volunteers, and neighbors—feel as if they’re part of our community and that they matter to us. So don’t leave anyone out.

The bottom line for a successful Market is to

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**mission | management | marketing | measurement**

***Thank you for using a share document. This 4M worksheet below is to help you think through what you just read and how to apply it to your situation. Read the share titled “The Strategy of the 4Ms” to learn more about this [marketumbrella.org](http://marketumbrella.org) teaching tool.***

Is this issue or strategy covered in your current mission (or values)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your management structure allow you time to handle this, or is there another organizational partner to help?

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How will you communicate to others about this issue or strategy (marketing)? \_\_\_\_\_

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When and how will you measure the impact of this resolution of this issue or the completion of this strategy?

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**cultivating the field of public markets for public good**