

idea corner

Involvement + Benefits = Successful Extension Programs

Successful Extension programs depend on involvement of clientele answering the question, "What's in it for me?"—and merchandising. If Extension clientele haven't been involved in program development and don't see a benefit, they're not likely to participate.

This message was presented at two-day University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service workshops entitled, "Merchandising Extension Education: Successfully Putting It All Together." These workshops were offered 4 times in April, 1981, for the entire Nebraska Extension staff.

The workshops grew out of ideas from a committee composed of county and state Extension staff. The committee emphasized the need for a team approach involving agents and specialists in merchandising programs. Because program costs are increasing, it's imperative that Extension resources be used effectively and efficiently.

The central theme was that merchandising begins with the inception of an idea and ends with the final evaluation. Clientele, or representatives of clientele, need to be involved in planning program objectives, program format, speakers, educational materials, resource

people, program locations, program times, audio-visual materials, promotional activities, and final evaluation.

To more effectively use speakers from outside Nebraska at all workshops during the two-week period, taped segments were used. This format also provided an opportunity to demonstrate ways to use videotape in Extension programs.

After merchandising principles were presented, participants divided into groups and prepared a merchandising plan for a specific program.

The workshops featured four segments: current state of the art of merchandising, involving clientele, merchandising yourself, and successfully putting it all together in a merchandising program.

To reinforce the application of marketing principles learned, merchandising plans were distributed. To provide a continuing sharing of ideas, an idea newsletter is being periodically distributed to Nebraska Extension staff.

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