

# Key Things to Understand About Your Customers

Aline O'Connor

SEMI's Marketing Module

Can you be a successful company  
without understanding your  
customers?

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Apple Computers

Cell phone companies in Africa

Exactly WHO is the customer for  
improved seed?

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Government?

Global Organizations, e.g. FAO?

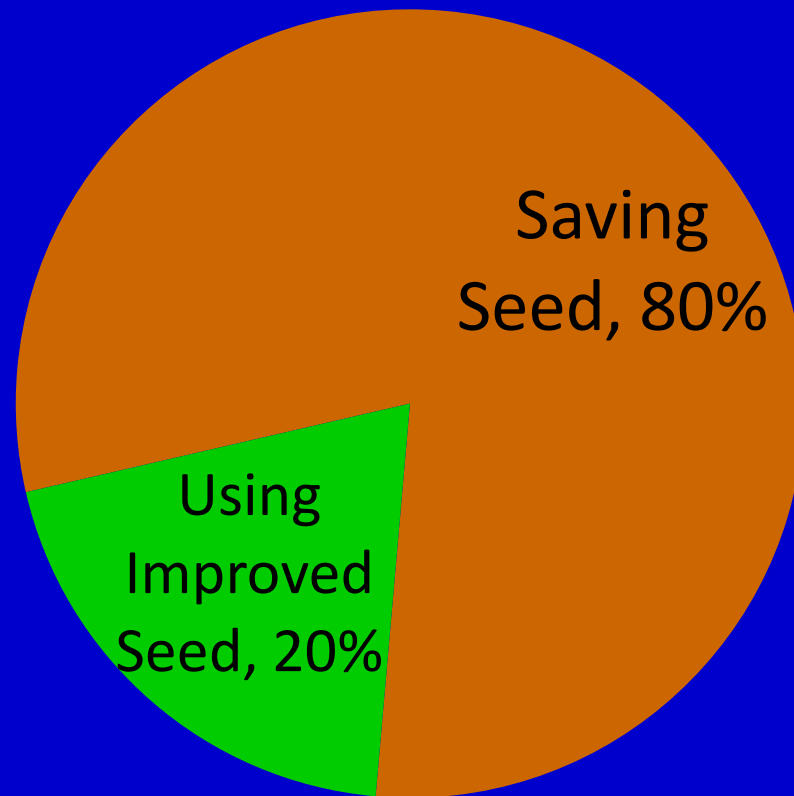
NGOs?

Agrodealers?

“Seed-Only” Dealers?

Farmers?

# Estimated Usage of Improved Seed In SSA (excluding RSA)



# CUSTOMER

"A customer is the most important visitor on our Premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption on work, he is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider on our business, but he is a part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him, he is doing a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.



Mahatma Gandhi

PROJECTS & SERV



Design, Supply &



Greenhouse

Irrigation

# 1. TRUST

Trust is the most critical element of a farmer's relationship with a seed company.





## 2. CONVENIENCE

The convenience of making the purchase is a big factor for customers.

What determines convenience?

# 3. RELIABILITY

From season to season, customers want their supplier to be reliable and consistent. They will be loyal to those brands that become reliable suppliers of high-quality seed.

What do farmers do if they do not have a reliable source of supply?

How do NGOs fit into this picture?

# 4. FAIR DEAL

Customers want a fair deal. They do not want to feel like they are being overcharged, nor do they want to hear that another farmer got a better deal than they did.

14-7-2008 FIPS AFRICA FOOD CROP PRODUCTION  
 RESURVEY SURVEY MEMBERS FROM EMATIRI AREA  
 HOST FARMER  
 WILLIAM O. WASHIPORE  
 TEL 0724124888

	NAME	PLANTING	CASA VA	POTATOES	MAIZE	GROUND NUTS	CON PEAS	BEANS	SOC. SEEDS	PLEASON PEAS	SOY BEANS
1.	WILLIAM WASHIPORE	✓	50	100	9kg	4kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
2.	ESAU OMUKUNDA	✓	100	100	20kg	1kg	1kg	6kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
3.	FRANCIS AMBUKO	✓	50	50	2kg	1kg	2kg	3kg	1kg	2kg	2kg
4.	WILCLIFE AMAKOBE	✓	400	200	20kg	6kg	2kg	3kg	1kg	2kg	2kg
5.	JOSEPH LUMUMBA	✓	100	100	6kg	2kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	2kg	2kg
6.	ELIZABETH AMUMETE	✓	50	50	5kg	4kg	2kg	2kg	4kg	2kg	2kg
7.	MOSES OMUKUNDA	✓	20	20	2kg	1kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
8.	ALFANO WANZY	✓	20	10	5kg	2kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
9.	PAUL NAMWALO	✓	30	40	2kg	2kg	1kg	3kg	1kg	1kg	1kg
10.	PETER LUCHERA	✓	50	50	2kg	2kg	1kg	3kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
11.	ROSEMARY NIVIS	✓	50	50	2kg	1kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
12.	LORNAH ONGIERI	✓	50	50	2kg	1kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
13.	EVBENE OMUHAKO	✓	50	50	2kg	1kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
14.	ALICE ASWANI	✓	50	50	2kg	4kg	4kg	8kg	8kg	8kg	8kg
15.	MARY MAKOKHA	✓	50	50	2kg	4kg	4kg	8kg	8kg	8kg	8kg
16.	MARGRETT ATYUMA	✓	20	20	5kg	2kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
17.	HASAN MULEWA	✓	20	20	6kg	2kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
18.	NATHAN MAKACHIA	✓	10	10	6kg	1kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
19.	RUTH AMILETA	✓	50	50	8kg	1kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
20.	LEONIDA OMUKHUYU	✓	100	100	8kg	10kg	1kg	1kg	1kg	1kg	1kg
21.	EVERINE ONSOMA	✓	50	50	2kg	12kg	1kg	10kg	10kg	10kg	10kg
22.	GLANDI ASEKA	✓	50	50	2kg	8kg	1kg	6kg	6kg	6kg	6kg
23.	RODA NJABANI	✓	50	50	2kg	4kg	1kg	4kg	4kg	4kg	4kg
24.	RODA WANJUKO	✓	30	30	2kg	5kg	1kg	3kg	3kg	3kg	3kg
25.	ROSE ANJANYA	✓	20	20	4kg	3kg	3kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
26.	SELWA WESA	✓	20	20	4kg	2kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
27.	ALBERTINAMWALO	✓	40	40	2kg	1kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
28.	ISAAK SHISAMA	✓	20	20	2kg	1kg	1kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
29.	SITOMAS OMUSULA	✓	50	50	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
30.	SAMUEL ANOIKI	✓	20	20	8kg	4kg	4kg	2kg	2kg	2kg	2kg
31.	JOICE ABIOLOAN	✓	20	20	8kg	6kg	1kg	2kg	1kg	1kg	1kg
32.	SALOME MBANI	✓	20	20	8kg	8kg	1kg	2kg	1kg	1kg	1kg

# 5. PURCHASING PATTERN

Customers can be characterized by their purchasing patterns. For example:

- Do your customers want to buy all their seed at once, in one large package?
- Or do they prefer to make several smaller purchases?
- How will they transport the seed, and how does your packaging size relate to this?

# 6. FARMERS ARE VISUAL!

Farmers are extremely VISUAL! Your marketing efforts will improve significantly if you always add strong visual elements to any interaction you have with farmers. (See tool #20, the Value of Visual References.)



# 7. APPRECIATION

Appreciation is the forgotten element in most customer relationships. Customers have choices, so good companies demonstrate their appreciation to loyal customers, especially if they are satisfied and spread good news about your company. Don't take them for granted!

# 8. EDUCATION

You are the seed expert. Your customers both need and expect good education from you. Whether it is a talk at a field day or thoughtful instructions on your bag, education is important to your customers.



# 9. CONSERVATIVE NATURE

Farmers are conservative risk managers. They will probably want to see your product perform for at least one season and possibly two before trying it for themselves. Keep this in mind in setting up both your demos and your expansion plans.





# 10. WORD OF MOUTH

If a farmer has a good experience with your seed, most likely he or she will tell approximately 10 people. But if that same farmer has a bad experience with your seed, he or she will likely tell 50 people! This is just human nature, but it is a great incentive to pay attention to quality.





# 11. SMART!

Farmers make  
smart decisions!



The more successful you are at looking at the seed purchasing decision through their eyes, the more you will be able to understand how to educate them and market to them.

# Let's Get Practical!

- How do you come to understand your customers?
  - Market Analysis?
  - Formal Data Surveys?
  - What Your Family Tells You?
  - Anecdotes?
  - Staying Close To Your Customer?

# Let's Get Practical!

Given what you now understand about customers, what kind of company do you want to be? What actions must you take?

Trustworthy?

Reliable and consistent?

Understanding?

Visual?

“Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don’t recognize them.”

Ann Landers