

# Building Your Name, Your Brand and Your Reputation



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This is my favorite time of the year for agriculture. As I drive around Lewis County and across the state, I see steam rising from sugarhouses nestled in their sugar bushes offering up the sweet aroma of maple. This is a tradition that has been going on for hundreds of years that offers consumers a wholesome natural sweetener that can be used in cooking as a rub, a glaze or as a sugar substitute. Pure maple syrup is so much more than something you pour on your pancakes—you can sweeten your tea, coffee, smoothies or even jazz up a cocktail. New York State alone produced 18% or 601,000 gallons of syrup for the 2015 season, giving it the rank of second in United States Maple Production.

All maple producers across the state need to think about their reputation and quality control. Your brand on your syrup is an indication of the value of your syrup and the quality. Brand is more than your name. Having your own brand and/or using a state-wide brand certification says that you have met or exceed certain standards when you are producing your “Pure Maple Syrup” and value added maple confections. It is important to portray your product in a positive way to attract consumers and also provide something they will remember after they have used your quality product.

So how do you get consumers to have a positive brand awareness and associate with your product? Your brand needs to be easy to remember, easy to pronounce and simple. It needs to tie into the product you are selling and be

appropriate, offering enough to consumers that they know what the product is and who you are so they can come back and purchase some more. Your brand should offer some positive values and images and follow legal guidelines.

The importance of the value that you build into your brand will provide consistent identification on the part of consumers. Follow through with your company name, pictures, social media, websites and other items that represent your products and business with your brand to help create even more consumer loyalty and awareness. Quality is the key here with marketing and making sure your customers and future customers have positive tasting experiences.

Your goal as a maple producer, besides always providing quality products for the consumer, is to develop a positive reputation with your customers so you have repeat buyers. You only have one chance to make a first impression with a new customer—make it a good one! The 2016 sugaring season has already started here in Lewis County and it looks to be a promising year. We can only hope for continued sap flow and favorable weather conditions for a nice long season.

