Perception, marketing and acceptability

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“The best way to predict the future is to create it”.
Peter F. Drucker

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We have a great story and we should not be frightened to tell it
Perception

- We have heard a lot about our knowledge of risks
  - Risk - combination of the probability of harm occurring and the severity of that harm
- Paracelsus (1493-1541):
  "Dosis facit venenum." ("The dose makes the poison.")
  Source ► Pathway ► Receptor
- But how our activities and risk are perceived is no less important
  perceived risk = risk + outrage
  www.psandman.com
- If you reduce “outrage” you bring perceived risk closer to actuarial risk
Outrage factors

- involuntary (out of my control)
- artificial and industrial,
- unfamiliar and/or exotic,
- hard to understand (not self-explanatory, imbued with complexities),
- memorable (because of odour, noise or other nuisances),
- dreaded (disease, pollution, endocrine activity, cancer),
- not reversible (e.g. persistent pollutants added to soils),
- affecting future generations (uncertainty about long-term impacts),
- unfair
  - the farmer gets the benefits and the neighbour only gets nuisance/risk
  - city dwellers dumping on rural dwellers
Reducing outrage

- Avoid odour nuisance
- Smart, clean operation
  - no mud on roads
- Consideration for neighbours
  - avoid school congestion, weddings, funerals, Bar Mitzvahs,
  - leaflet drop to inform – “we shall start Thursday and finish Friday”
- Celebrate/explain the benefits of biosolids
  - talk with the media
Perception
Two farmers in conversation:

farmer 1 "Are you going to use sludge?"

farmer 2 "No but I’m going to give that TERRA a try - that looks pretty good"
Selling and Marketing

• They are different
  – marketing is not a posh euphemism for selling
  – selling is a skill [it’s not a dirty word] and
  – in some people it is a gift

• To do either you must know your product(s)
  – Selling biosolids is a “technical” sell
Better mouse-trap

• Ralph Waldo Emerson:
  – “If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap, than his neighbour, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door.”

• Emerson was wrong

• Even if you build the better mouse-trap, people have to know about it and its features and benefits – that’s selling
Compliance with legal and other requirements/standards

(why do some people think having a standard will create a market?)

• Compliance is a given it does not create a market, with a few exceptions – mainly ethical
  – “organic” “kosher” “halal” “vegan”
  – But even these are really entry tickets to the market, when you are in the market the product still has to compete on merit (total experience) and price

• If the standard has no customer relevance it won’t affect market share
  – EcoLabel for washing-machines c.f. compost
Marketing

• Finds out what customers want
  – How big is the market?
  – Is there an unfilled gap?
  – Are we going to compete with existing suppliers?
  – What design features ring their bells?
  – What price will they accept?
  – Can the company meet all these requirements?
    • It’s valuable to know what you shouldn’t attempt

• Test marketing
  – Do customers like this implementation?
A brand

- Does not make a market
- It encapsulates the total product experience
  - It is shorthand
- It takes much longer to build than to lose
  - It is like a reputation
- If it is to be an asset it must be managed and nurtured
- It is not just the window display
  - a good display gets people into the store BUT
  - there’s got to be something in the store to keep them and bring them back
Brand Values

- Decide your values and live them
  - Keeping the brand up to its values needs constant attention

- Living the brand requires open, honest, participative environment
A good salesperson

• Finds out what the customer needs
  – Customers don’t want to know about you and what you want from them
  – For biosolids to agriculture that is cropping plans, target yields, fertiliser needs, etc.
  – For land restoration it is soil materials, history, intended use, timescales …

• Then pitches the product’s features that fit the customer’s needs using his/her extensive knowledge of the products
Restoration is technical

Soil is a living ecosystem – don’t treat it like dirt

Be prepared to walk away if you are not confident restoration will be done right
Conclusions

- Biosolids – long history, historic risks under control, no evidence of emerging risks, BUT don’t forget OUTRAGE
- Legislation has eliminated dangerous substances and cross-compliance is a new layer of control
- Not breaking the law is not good enough - don’t do CATNAP
- HACCP is a paradigm shift
- Biosolids suppliers should understand their products, find out their customers’ needs and wants, live the brand and regard field operations as their shop windows
- Use of biosolids on land is the least expensive, most sustainable option but it should cost what it costs to do it properly

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