

MINIMUM AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT

YOUR ROAD M.A.P. TO MARKET
DRIVEN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT AND SCALE.

Product Development for Agriculture

How to launch your

Minimum Agricultural Product (M.A.P.)

The minimum viable product approach has deep roots in Silicon Valley as tech companies built apps, corporations, and software and failed as fast as they could in front of live audiences to gain feedback. These Silicon Valley pioneers make companies like Evernote, Survey Monkey, Google, Facebook, Apple, LinkedIn, HP, Netflix, Airbnb, Tesla, and a host of other enterprises worth Billions.

In the book, "The Lean Startup", Eric Ries describes the process of launching a starter project/service to bring in cash flow to a new company while continuing to make pivots as feedback from the users direct the direction of the new company.

By building a company based off of user experiences and feedback the successful companies (Quickbooks, Dropbox, Wealthfront) were able to create business empires that were user-friendly because they were built with the feedback of early adopters and super fans.

I wish I had been aware of this line of thinking when I went into business in 2002. Instead, I did what most small business owners do. I had an idea that I wanted to see happen. When you can let go of what "I" wants and listen to your clients a business can survive and thrive.

When we built our farm, it was based on what I wanted. When we struggled, I knew the fault was my own. I was not marketing, I was not addressing the right clients, and I was not presenting what buyers were wanting. The failure or success of my companies rested on my efforts. I was falling short of my goals, my employee's security, my debt service, and the community I wanted to serve.

This was my starting point for reaching out to business strategists who were experienced, connected, and who had systems & track records of success. At a time when I carried the false belief of scarcity in life, I found ways to invest in myself through business coaches and specific programs to learn what I was never taught in school or college. I did this at a time when I did not have the money to invest, but when we are pushed past the brink, we do whatever is necessary to get out of the hole.

Over the course of four years, I took various types of education including self study books, endless podcasts, four business coaches, event workshops, three speaker and presentation intensives, a personal stylist, email marketing, social media management, product launches, photography and video production, Mass Media, and public relations courses. When people talk of self-structured MBAs, I have it. It was expensive, it was time-consuming, and it had nothing to do with farming.

The return from all of this education? A diversified and better business that serves my community and employees people I care about. An incredible and diverse network of positive leaders in their fields. Opportunities to work with incredible people and projects. Profound insights on how traditional and social media work for and against a small business, how to tell a story on stage, video, and through a photograph; and how to use my network to distribute these messages. How did I wind up in your inbox? What degree of separation do we have?

I have been speaking about my company, Paris Victory Gardens, and our Minimum Agricultural Product for years without the fear of someone stealing my idea. We grew our offerings to a farmers market and started a food truck for another point of distribution. My original property

management company is still in operation, and I have a team surrounding me and supporting my passion project of helping other small farms grow better agri-business. I also learned the way I have developed applications for any small business.

I have taken all that I have learned, and continues to learn, and stacked all of these processes, mindsets, and aligned them up with the farm and culinary industries' needs. Our industries have always built our dreams first, then tried to hit people over the head with our ideas, and then wonder why people are not supporting what we see as great causes and ideas.

Your ideas could be the next big thing. But without proper development and marketing, they will fall on the deaf ears of clients who do not care.

Introducing M.A.P., your Minimum Agricultural Product.

Based off of how I have started and run my companies, this program goal is to introduce and walk you through the following:

- Idea Brainstorming
- Market Research
- Product Development
- Influencer beta testing and influencer marketing
- Pivots
- Soft Launching
- Promotions
- Launch
- Scaling your next farm product/service

Sounds simple right? We are going to go deep on research, nitpick wording your clients use, learn & understand their needs, and most likely come out of the other side with a product completely different than what you first envisioned and far superior that is made for your local market. And all of the while we will be validating benchmarks for continuing, or pivot to go down the right road.

This is the way I do consult when our services are sought out. It is only as good as what you put in. It is for people who can think for themselves, but who want assistance finding answers for their farm, local market, and products. Our consulting is for people who are willing to research building a farm. It is also for people who have built who need help turning their hard work into income to paying clients. This is also the same way I have served clients in the automotive, real estate, finance, political, fitness, and non-profit sector. My heart just happens to be in this for small farmers.

This is the business strategy and gorilla marketing for today's digital market where farmers can and should be celebrated and become leaders. This is business development in a tough, loud, and crowded market. This is for small farmers wanting to play big in a marketplace where only the strong, fast, nimble, clever, creative, and media savvy survive.

Thankfully these are times when leaders make the rules. In today's media and business landscape those who push ideas to the right clients win. None of us want to us the next big box chain or serve a billion crappy food items. This is where a handful of true loyal fans can support a business and a legacy.

Six figures on a quarter acre are one thing. One hundred super fans spending \$100 per month on a premium product is another. One hundred of the right kind of super fans have ten friends who also have \$100 a month to spend on exceptional products and services. It adds up quick.

What this ebook isn't.

This is not how to grow better yields, when to fertilize, or when you should start your tomatoes. This isn't about how much you can make per year on a small lot. This is not a get rich quick program. There is work involved. There is research to be done. You have to get out there in the real world to validate your ideas and be willing to change hard held beliefs if the data shows a change is needed. This is research and development that takes time to test, tweak, and implement.

The proof is in implementation.

These are the steps I have used to tweak old companies and start new ones that scale up. Each time we start something new, we get faster and faster.

Our food truck launched in 33 days from a used empty truck on the side of the road to certified kitchen serving a concept menu unlike anything else in town.

It's how I began a social media management service that in one month went from zero clients to bring in \$3750 of monthly recurring income doing what I love doing and takes less than 24 hours a month with lots of bonus perks. I'm not telling you this to brag, but to illustrate the type of media and ad buys other industries are willing to spend on the local level to stay competitive.

It is also how we launched Victory Lunch Club with a charter membership that ensures we sell out of everything we plant in our farm year round. It is how we implemented add-on sales to our client list. It's how we also used our existing infrastructure to create a new market segment at our farmers market. It is how we moved into catering and events we pre-sell out.

I don't want you to be me; I want you to be you. I cannot hold your hand, but I can teach you how I operate and run my operations with great support staff. I could consult with you one on one, but it would cost you an outrageous daily rate plus expenses. This is how I would consult your farm business if that were to happen, but by delivering in this form, you can take it at your own pace.

There are a specific order and way we do things. These methods are a conglomeration of all of the business coaching and studying I learned from and implemented myself in the agricultural, media management, and hospitality space. It is also precisely how I consult people in and outside of the agricultural industry on social media management, public relations, and product/service development.

This is the checklist we use for all of our product/business launches.
Below I will go into the ways we complete this checklist.

Brainstorming Strengths, assets, and market needs

Part 1:

- Testing Ideas
- Idea Validation
- Your Ideal Client
- Your Market Size
- Farm Location and Distribution Factors

Part 2:

- Idea M.A.P. Worksheets

Part 3:

- Plugging in Ideas to the Original End Goals

Market Research Resources

- Surveys
- Blue Ocean Opportunities
- Social Media Research
- Audience Interest Lists
- Reviewing Lessons Learned
- Validation Markers
- Keeping it Simple

Your Business Structure

- Keeping Your M.A.P. Simple
- Removing Steps
- Clients to Avoid
- Client Discovery and Targeting a Niche

Developing Your M.A.P.

- Press Release Exercise
- Product Variables
- Product Variable Examples
- Process Variables
- Packaging
- Labels
- Branding
- Logo Considerations
- Distribution
- Cost
- Market Positioning
- Pricing

Beta Testing

- Influencer Marketing
- Influencer Examples
- Beta Testing Goals
- Influencer Survey Tips
- Survey Ideas
- Influencer Pivot One
- Your First Sale

Influencer Promotion Events

Soft Launch

- Soft Launch

- Post Soft Launch Analysis

- Pivot Benchmarks

- The Media and the Long Lead

- Segmented Soft Launches

Pre-Launch Preparations and Promotions

- Promotions and Charter Membership Drive

- Promoting the Launch

- The Promotional Countdown

- Club Mentality

- Outside Sales

- Press Release

- Mitigating Stress

- Launch Date

- Day 1, Launch

Indications for Growth

- When to Launch a New M.A.P.

- Your Web of Products

Continued below.

Let's take a more in-depth look at some of the steps:

Either by yourself as a sole owner, a family, or a multi-person team sit down to make your plan, delicate or block off time to get these individual components executed.

Brainstorming Strengths, assets, and market needs:

Part 1: Determine what skills you and your team currently have. Any business, accounting, computer skills, maintenance & repair skills, ability to sell, working knowledge of the skills needed for the business you are thinking about, network; anything that may aid in the future of your business.

You and your immediate team, spouse, are all contractors to the collective skillsets. Put the right people in the right places. If none of you can correctly keep financials you know to allow for a CPA in your future budget.

If you want to become a tomato grower, have you ever interned or took a workshop for hands-on training? If not you might want to invest in a workshop or find a mentor to intern for a bit. So additional time and investments should be allocated to your timeline & budget.

Remember, most people rush into a business trying to build on a foundation not strong enough to support the businesses framework.

If we were to look at your end goals, how much do you need to bring home to consider the business a success? After figuring in actual bring home profit where do you need to set sales and profitability goals at?

Exploring Market Segments:

By looking at the possibility of premium agriculture products/services, bread & butter type consistent ideas, community sales, and passion projects we can not only more clearly define our clients but define the culture and expectations of your farm's operation.

Testing Ideas

Idea Validation

When we have it in our minds to start a business or product line, it is easy to get excited and have friends and family rally around you. That's encouraging, but we need to know what real potential buyers are thinking. Getting reactions from ideal clients, testing responses from multiple market segments, and trying out different ways to approach the description of your idea will help you determine if you are close to having a fan base or need to rethink your concept or presentations.

Your Ideal Client

Understanding that not everyone is, or should be, your client is essential marketing 101. We need to dig deeper than ever before to know why people buy products/services and how seasonality all effect peoples buying decisions. Age, gender, affinity, habits, profession, hobbies, networks, family considerations, education, generation, upbringing, regional concerns, seasonality, health, and more can all change how someone will perceive and interact with your product line up. Dig as deep as you can through a total immersion into their world. Go undercover and gather intel. You are building a case for yourself.

Your Market Size

The population is one thing, how many people are in your market, and what is your market share? Knowing how people preview your company, agile to pivot to market needs, and understanding your client's pain points can better position you to market share leader.

Farm Location and Distribution Factors

Your production (farming and packaging) location will directly affect your pricing, costs, and labor expenses. Are you considering existing or needed infrastructure, road conditions, toll roads, vehicle types, maintenance, insurance, fuel, and traffic patterns all need to be factored in for capital expense, variable expense, and product pricing

Part 2:

Market Positioning

Do you want to put out a premium product or service, bread and butter weekly consumable, commonly products to wholesale, terminal markets, or restaurants, or are you following a passion project driven by social, ecological, or non-profit? Knowing where your goals within a market segment will help you target your audience, direct your media plan, guide your public relations, ad copy, and branding. What is your companies identity?

Part 3:

Plugging in Ideas to the Original End Goals

Looking back to your original family and financial needs as well as professional aspirations, can you take all of the market research and plug in all of the variables to describe a business that is satisfying to your needs and can generate enough support and sales to stay financially sustainable?

By understanding your market position, market share, clients needs and lifestyle, the language they need to make decisions and priced to make a profit you can start to realize your dream job and actions. This is all accomplished by front-loading the work of market research and building a product for your buyers, not a product for just your personal needs.

Market Research Resources

Surveys Examples categories can include:

Demographics

Lifestyle

Food Habits

Food Categories

Sub-niche Ag Categories

Diets

Health

Shopping Habits

Affinity Categories

Blue Ocean Opportunities

Looking for gaps in your local market that are under-serviced, not services at all, or opportunities to combine products or services to add premium prices.

Social Media Research

Facebook Group Sources

Facebook Photo Research

Instagram #

Top 30 #'s per category

Search Audience Interest Lists

Use audience insights from your page to determine interests and research ideas of your naturally attracted audience.

Reviewing Lessons Learned:
A look at real-world examples.

Validation Markers: Polarized, emotional responses, pattern recognition, and language learned from your research.

Your Business Structure

Keeping Your M.A.P. Simple:

Taking a step back to avoid over-complication, unnecessary actions, wasted efforts, and additional investments in your process/product development.

Removing Steps:

Asking through surveys and one on one conversations what if questions to avoid over-engineering or over exceeding expectations.

Clients to Avoid:

Clients that can't consume, can't pay, unable to satisfy, unable to use your system.

Client Discovery and Targeting a Niche:

Ability to produce/service

Warm Receptions

Scaleable to your knowledge and sales area for growth and diversification of

Satellite clients of the same product/service that will buy for different reasons that will also scale and are consumable.

Developing Your M.A.P.

Press Release Exercise:

Write out your future based on assets, talents, research, and runway to deconstruct the steps needed to launch to a warm audience.

Product Variables:

What are all of the supply chain, distribution, skills needed, and seasonality concerns to deliver as much as necessary to meet your year-end goals?

Product Variable Examples:

Suppliers who stay in stock has reason freight charges and customer service that can scale with you.

Vehicle, road conditions, and overhead of vehicles and equipment.

Process Variables:

Labor force and for both skilled and unskilled labor. Time to produce, prep, deliverer, and administrative process needs like billing, banking, payroll, and tax prep.

Packaging:

Let your survey results from your buyers dictate the type and size of your containers. We see a lot of early start-ups worried about containers before the farm is close to production. The worry leads to buying packaging that is later not usable, takes up current storage, and drains initial financial resources.

Labels: Like the packaging, there are always additional concerns about labeling. Aside from the branding, there are legal requirements. Each state, and sometimes your county, will have different regulations. The first steps to finding out your requirements are; legal counsel, talking to your county extension office, county health department, and your state's department of agriculture. The local farmers market manager could also be a resource.

If you are selling the whole sale, ask the buyer of their requirements, which can differ wildly from state as you are selling to a third party who is not the end user.

At the minimum, you would want a logo, address, social media, phone number, website, and email address.

Distribution: The Achilles' Heal of small farms. With time at a premium, distance, rough farm to market roads, toll roads, fuel, insurance, maintenance, and safe food handling issues; the act of getting goods from point A to point B still in a sellable condition is often overlooked. You will need a reliable vehicle that will also keep your goods fresh, clean, and intact.

Don't forget to consider the size of your vehicle when it comes to deliverers in tight urban spaces, parking, and having to parallel park a larger vehicle. Maybe even blocking traffic during deliveries.

Cost: Incorporating your business entity, hiring a CPA, buying accounting software, computers, credit card readers, paper invoices, insurance (General Liability, Auto Insurance, Health Care), printers, scales, storage with racks, janitorial, cell phones, subscription services, work clothes, design work, licenses, marketing budget, association and market fees, wages, unemployment and workers comp, loan interest, rent/lease/mortgage, taxes, salaries, maintenance, depreciation, training, and more.

Plus- Anything you need for actual agricultural production.

Greenhouses, machinery, implements, tools, infrastructure for power, water, & gas. Fencing, irrigation, soil/water tests, seeds, prorogation, lights, pumps, growing media, fertilizer, PVC, endless fittings, packaging, labels, and any specialty items relevant to your operation.

Knowing these actual costs, or at least considering them in the feasibility study opening your farm operation will help you accurately budget, fund, administer, and price products

Market Positioning: If we look back to your idea testing of market segments and determine what category (Premium/Bread & Butter/commodity/or Passion Project) your product/service falls into. What your clients value (time & quality over money-value over cost), and how you will position and brand your company as a high medium or low-end product. Of course, you need to know all of your costs and necessary profit margins required to meet your financial end goals.

Pricing: Are you competing to race to the bottom? Or, are you defining a market segment and dominating with products and services specifically designed to fill the needs of happy paying clients?

Expenses, profit, branding, perception, value, market share, and the right clients serviced by consistency will determine not only you're starting out prices but your future increases and pricing of new products and services as you increase revenue streams.

You want some people saying you are too high; it eliminates problem clients and lets you focus on the people who value your company and allow for better care of your developed following. Serve them to the best of your ability.

Beta Testing

Influencer Marketing: Every local market, town, small city, neighborhood, industry, organization, office, has an influencer.

It may be the boss, a lifelong resident, a longterm leader, a mayor, teacher, fitness instructor, doctor, nutritionist, journalist, business owner, philanthropist, church elder, or just a charismatic person who radiated positivity.

These people are well connected, in the know, on top of trends, socialites, and love to join people and ideas. They will be a loud supporter of anything that brings value to them and their community. They are the most weighted word of mouth you can get. What they say matters. And, if they are in your target market you need to add value to them as soon as possible.

Let them in early to test your product or service. Let them know you value their time and opinion. Ask if they would beta test your products, and in return, they get early perks to help you refine your process, product, and marketing. Show them you are committed to excellence by taking the time to beta test.

Beta Testing Goals: Because these influencers are a part of your new team, they will have a vested interest in your company and will want to see it succeed because their name is on it in part. Give them full permission to give you honest, critical, and constructive feedback. Ask for mentorship, and when ready you will ask them to help promote. Once again they can be on the ground floor of discovering new trends and introducing them to their community.

Influencer Survey Tips: Brief surveys on specifics throughout the process is essential. Do not re-invent the wheel each week. Focus on one thing like presentation, taste, or ad copy to refine critical elements one at a time. Listen and be thankful for their feedback now, before you fully launch a product. The time and effort you will save, and the mistakes you will avoid may be the difference between a great start up and auto of used farm equipment.

Influencer Pivots: Once you have your product idea, clients narrowed down, a process in place, costs figured, pricing adjusted, and beta testers selected and surveyed it is time to adapt your M.A.P. to real market reactions from your beta testers.

Is your product over or under delivering, priced, or unclear as to the needs you wanted to accomplish? Does your marketing copy, images, logos, and message convey your M.A.P.'s place in the marketplace and segment?

With the beta, tester results adjust everything you can now, maybe refine multiple process, supply chain, distribution, and marketing. Stay profitable.

Your First Sale: At this point, you have not launched yet, but your beta testers should be ready to become buyers. Be prepared to collect anything you need to close the sale help them pre-promote to their network to start sales before you even launch. As long as you set the expectation of waiting until perfect, under-promising, and over delivering you will have super fans from day one.

Influencer Promotion Events: If the opportunity presents itself or at the insistence of your beta testers to promote to their friends at a private event, take it. Have your story, marketing, and sales collecting process ready for pre-launch orders.

Soft Launch

Soft Launch: It is now time to test your process, team, and faith. You have done the hard part, now practice delivering to a warm, friendly, and caring group of supporters. Invite the people who helped you along the way and learn what you need to publicly launch. Look for flaws, system bottlenecks, and suggestions to improve the final version of your M.A.P.

Post Soft Launch Analysis: Gather your team to discuss the soft launch. What went right, what went wrong? What tools or supply were needed or ran out? How did you stay feel? How did your guests think? Did they tell your staff things they did not tell you?

Deconstruct everything and tie up the loose ends.

Pivot Benchmarks: Last chance for improvements, simplification, and final marketing copy tweaks.

The Media and the Long Lead: Prior to launching and hopefully during a beta test you have reached out to local and regional reporters, journalists, or social media influencers that all cover the topics you are operating in (local food, restaurant reviews, local events/business, health, and wellness, etc.). Now that you are on their radar and have built a genuine relationship you can reach out concerning your opening day launch. This type of favorable earned media will create free buzz to a broader audience and will give social proof to people who are your future clients. Awareness matters and if people are talking it's a win. Having anyone with this large of a voice will be beneficial in the future as well. Just remember to take care of your network.

Segmented Soft Launches: If you have the runway, host different soft launches to test mixed reactions from several demographics. This will help spread the word, and by various groups, you may be able to spend more time and dig deeper with your guests.

Pre-Launch Preparations and Promotions

Promotions and Charter Membership Drive: To drive early early sign-ups and known sales on day one, pre-selling CSA shares, subscriptions, gift cards, memberships, discount club memberships, charter members, anything that gets people enrolled early and recognition as early bird supporters has value and will develop your M.A.P. as something your tribe cannot live without.

Promoting the Launch: Enrolling your early supporters, beta testers, network, press, and social media accounts a coordinated group blast over even a short period will give the effect of a lot of people talking all at once.

Provide your people with a swipe copy file. Branded & consistent images in proper aspect ratios that make sharing a no-brainer. Early reviews from beta testers and soft be used for social proof that you have put in the work, and you are what you say you are. Encourage people to use their own words when sharing for authentic traction.

Preparing a press release for not only your in-network media contacts but sent to other journalists in the region that cover similar material does not cost you anything and if put it in will be another point of contact for the people in your area to find you.

Find a photographer to document your upcoming launch date so you can focus on the business while retaining the day's events to use in future marketing.

Launch Date: Take care of your support network and yourself leading up to the day of launch. If applicable ask for vendor or supply and labor support. They want you to succeed. Most people do not treat their opening day as a big event, vendors want to support you and have budgets to help with single, giveaways, and refreshments. It never hurts to ask.

Have everything prepared and overstaffed so you can focus on customer interaction and the hospitality of your new clients.

Congratulations! You made this happen and are better positioned than most because you had a pre-launch plan, media plan, network plan, public relations plan, and built a business based on your markets needs merged with your talents.

Indications for Growth

When to Launch a New M.A.P.: You will find that even during beta testing people will start feeding you ideas on your next product. You also have your original idea brainstorming that could scale up or down into different categories. After launch people will start asking for expanded product lines, different packages sizes, and add-on products and services that complement the original M.A.P. launch.

Your Web of Products: Through a much faster run of testing (because you have a baseline of information and know how & where to gather information) you can validate ideas from internal and external concepts. These are the steps to diversifying income streams, extending your season, and audience of clients.

What was your take away from this ebook?

Are you wanting to leave the profession that you feel is mentally beating you down? Are you drawn to farming for your family and community, but know you must mitigate the uncertainty of who you will sell to and how much you should charge? Are you worried about year-round income? Wouldn't it be nice to have a media and Public Relations plan with your business plan?

Have you started your farm but struggling to attract repeat and premium clients? Are you having a hard time with the feeling of too many competitors in crowded markets? Wouldn't it help to have the confidence knowing you are selling a premium product to eager clients who connect with you? There is now no competition because you are the leader in a new market segment.

The above steps are how I plan out not only our business growth, income streams, pivots in current business, but also media plans and consults for other companies. This process is counter-intuitive for many small business owners. This is not the "build it, and they will come" approach.

This is your needs and wants, your why, your talents, and your diligent and thorough market research. This is proof of concept through validations, beta testers, influencer marketing, and knowing, not guessing-KNOWING you are launching to pre-orders and an eager audience of the right buyers.

Agriculture and small business is a long hard road. This is not a shortcut, but a navigational chart through uncertainty. Will they buy? What do they want? What will they pay? Business is

trying, and I want you to become a leader in a tough industry through market understanding and strong business and marketing. You must take the time to know who you are serving and why sales are happening. Leave nothing to chance. Learn from your mistakes. Play the long game while staying positive and being a part of your community will carry you through the tough times.

We will dig deeper with real-world examples on Sunday's State of the Soil season 2 in the Three Master Class Sessions.

I hope this puts some things into perspective of our internal operations, development, and networking activities.

Plant Seeds Daily.