

Case study: Garden of Flavor

A manufacturer of cold-pressed organic juices, Garden of Flavor debuted in 2012 as a juice bar in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Since then, founder and CEO Lisa Reed has been scaling the Cleveland-based business by wholesaling products to regional grocery chains. Yet as Reed strove to expand her company's footprint, marketing became a greater challenge.

“It was easy to grow at first by doing in-store demos and regional events in Columbus and Cleveland where everyone knew me as ‘the Juice Lady,’ ” Reed explains. “Yet I wasn’t sure how to present my products in places where they don’t know my story or anything about our brand.”

Reed initially reached out to marketing firms for help, but quickly found them beyond her price range. Taking investor money wasn’t an option either, because she didn’t want to relinquish any control over her products. Then Reed learned about the City of Cleveland’s Economic Gardening initiative and was accepted into the program in August 2017. This enabled her to work with the National Strategic Research Team (NSRT), a group of experts in commercial databases, geographic information systems and digital marketing at the National Center for Economic Gardening. Among deliverables, the NSRT provided Reed with:

- An overview of the juicing industry and trends, from both a regional and global perspective.
- Scientific studies about the benefits of juicing, ranging from improved digestive and immune systems to disease prevention and weight loss.
- A demographic snapshot of her customers.
- Keyword and social media strategies to generate buzz about her products.

As a result of the data, Reed learned her target customers were older and better educated than she assumed. And she was happy to discover juicing fans prefer to make purchases in grocery stores rather than specialty juice shops. “At the time, I was considering franchising juice bars as a way to expand,” Reed explains. “But the researchers’ findings reinforced that I was doing the right thing, to go forward full force and be confident about it.”

The data also gave Reed greater confidence about maintaining her niche audience and prices, which range from \$5.99 to \$7.99 per bottle. One particularly important takeaway, Reed learned people’s primary reason



Lisa Reed, founder and CEO of Garden of Flavor in Cleveland, Ohio.

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for buying cold-pressed organic juice was health-related. “I always had a gut feeling, but nothing I could substantiate,” Reed says. “Rather than anecdotal comments from customers at the juice bar, this provided concrete research and scientific studies I felt comfortable using in my marketing efforts.”

Armed with the data, Reed revamped her company’s social media postings. For example, instead of broad activity-related terms, such as #yoga, Reed has been using hashtags that are more health oriented and highlight ingredients in her products (e.g., #alkaline, #juicecleanse, #turmeric, #wheatgrass and #probiotics).

Another change suggested by the researchers, Reed is taking a more prominent role as the face of Garden of Flavor. “My competition is very large companies,” she explains, referring to BluePrint (Hain Celestial), Naked Juice (PepsiCo) and Suja Life (Coca-Cola). “In contrast, I continue to be involved in every single bottle of juice made in our production facility. We’re tasting every batch and checking every veggie that goes into our juice.” To help communicate this hands-on approach, Reed has begun to use more images of herself and staff in marketing efforts.

Reed credits the strategies she’s implemented from Economic Gardening for boosting sales in Whole Food’s mid-Atlantic stores — which led to expansion in the retailer’s Rocky Mountain region. To help get the word out to this new audience, Reed invested in six ads in a Denver magazine, and incorporated information gleaned from Economic Gardening about the health benefits of aronia berries. “We began with four flavors in this market, and normally I would have predicted aronia would have been the least popular,” she says. “Yet by educating people on its benefits, the aronia juice is in second place. What’s more, it’s beating our popular turmeric elixir, which is unheard of!”

Reed is also using the data and information from Economic Gardening to redesign her website, which will feature a B2C component for the first time. “I don’t think I would have ever tried this because our product needs to be shipped overnight, which is costly,” she says. “Yet the researchers found data that shows our consumers not only like to have products delivered to their homes, they also embrace subscription-based platforms.”

As a result of her Economic Gardening engagement, Reed expects to double Garden of Flavor’s revenue to \$6.5 million in 2018, up from \$3.2 million in 2017. To keep up with the growing sales, she’s added three full-time positions and one part-time, increasing staff to 14 full-time and two part-time employees.

“The Economic Gardening experience was fantastic!” Reed says. “I’m still in shock that such qualified individuals cared so much about my business. The effort they put into the research and information was amazing, and I really looked forward to my calls with them. Having that team behind me gave me such confidence. It’s made all the difference in the world to me.”



The National Center for Economic Gardening is a partnership between the Edward Lowe Foundation and Chris Gibbons. NCEG helps state and regional organizations establish Economic Gardening networks, delivers Economic Gardening services and maintains national standards in training and certification. To learn more, visit www.edwardlowe.org.