

Marketing and Business Management

Joanne Abramson
Fort Bragg, California

Marketing and selling offspring requires advance selling techniques that can incorporate several types of media including newspaper, magazines, and the internet. Repeat clients can also be a valuable resource for selling offspring. This paper will discuss the concepts necessary to provide an outlet for selling surplus stock.

Introduction

Perhaps one of the least discussed aspects of breeding birds is what to do when the breeder is successful and produces chicks. Breeders often overlook the selling aspects of their surplus stock until the birds are weaned and ready to go to new homes. For many breeders it is emotionally hard to sell the baby birds that they have raised for many weeks or months. They may have spent many years trying to breed and never given a thought about what to do once the chicks arrived. Breeding can become so time consuming that the chicks may be ready for new homes before the breeder has thought about who will buy the birds from them. This paper will discuss the steps required to sell your birds in a timely manner.

Marketing Your Birds

How do breeders find the right homes for their birds?

The most successful marketing comes from producing a great bird. A healthy, normal sized bird that is well adjusted is the breeder's best ambassador for future sales. A healthy bird is the breeder's greatest asset and best salesman.

The three primary areas discussed in this paper include marketing, sales and services.

Marketing is the way the breeder finds the buyer of his product or service. It is the art of joining the seller and the consumer. Its primary function

is advertising.

Sales is the agreement on a price and delivering the bird. In addition to an exchange of money, it might include having a pre-purchase agreement or sales contract, which attorney Larry Ring has discussed in more detail (See "Birds and the Law" *AAV Manual of Aviculture Medicine and Management*).

Services are what, if any, extras are provided by the seller to the buyer. Services can include cages, toys, feed, health certificates etc.

There are two methods of marketing the breeder's product, either active or passive (See Table).

Advertising

Advantage: Can reach a lot of potential buyers if the advertisements are placed in specialty bird magazines. Possibility that the breeder can meet the buyer in person or at least that the breeder and buyer will talk directly. The buyer is also able to contact the breeder with questions about the breeder's bird. Long term relationships can occur between the breeder and the new owner. Not all clients will be able to come to see the bird therefore allowing the seller to spend more time with the varied duties of aviculture.

Disadvantage: May take one to three months or more to get into a specialty bird magazine. Seller needs to plan ahead. Newspaper advertisement can be costly. All advertisement have the disadvantage of people calling that are price shopping or wanting free information on how the breeder bred the birds. Typically the seller needs to allow one and a half to two hours for a client to come and see his birds. May create a security or disease risk if potential clients come to the breeder's home.

Booths at Bird Clubs and Bird Marts

Advantage: Direct exposure of the breeder's birds to potential buyers.

Disadvantage: Direct exposure of the breeder's birds to viruses and potential infections from their exposure to other birds and people. Technically, all birds not sold at the bird mart or show should be isolated from the rest of the breeder's birds when they are returned home. They should be quarantined as if they are new birds.

Bird or Pet Shops

Advantage: No need to deal directly with the retail buyer which saves the breeder time. Low security risk to the breeder.

Disadvantage: Breeder is unable to meet the person that is buying his bird. Will not usually know what happened to it. Lower profit to the breeder than if the breeder sold it to the retail consumer.

Table

Ways to Market Birds

ACTIVE

- Advertising in magazines, newspapers, club newsletters or on the Internet.
- Booths at bird shows and bird marts.
- Selling wholesale to pet or bird shops.

PASSIVE

- Referrals
- Repeat customers

Referrals

Advantage: The buyer has already been "sold" on the breeder's birds. Either they have a friend who has one or they have been told that the breeder is reliable.

Disadvantage: Takes time to establish clients who know the breeder's birds and refer others to them. Normally referrals only help breeders that have been producing baby birds for two or more years.

Repeat Customers

Advantage: The buyer and seller know each other from past interactions. The buyer knows the quality to expect, the seller knows the clients expectations. A previous working relationship has already been formed.

Disadvantage: Requires making many sales in order for people to come back to the breeder.

Sales

The sale of a bird, on the surface, is the agreement on a price and the delivery of a bird to the buyer. There are many expectations, however, held by the buyer and seller that might create problems. Whether realistic or not, they need to be dealt with.

The Buyers "Fantasy" of a Seller

- Has birds of good health and quality.
- Has the species they want to buy.
- At the price they are willing to pay.
- Available when they want it.

The Sellers "Fantasy" of a Buyer:

- Wants the bird the breeder has for sale.
- Has knowledge of the bird or is willing to learn.
- Has the "perfect" home for the bird. Has the money to buy it.
- Has realistic goals (does not want the bird delivered on Christmas day at 9 A.M.).

Realistic Expectations

Realistic expectations are sometimes hard to explain to a buyer. Buyers often have requirements that the seller might not be able to meet. What kind of bird do they want?

Some examples are:

- Will the bird talk?
- Will it stay tame for the rest of its life? Will I always be able to handle it?

- Will it bite me, my children, my husband, clients, friends, other pets or birds in the house?
- Will the breeder guarantee that the bird will be alive on arrival at the airport?
- Will the breeder guarantee that the bird will not die—for how long?
- Can the breeder finance the sale? (Can the buyer pay the breeder one hundred dollars a month until it is paid for?)
- Will the breeder hold the bird for six months until the buyer moves to a new home?
- Will the breeder trade a _____ for a _____.

The seller may have to pass up a lot of sales until a buyer with realistic goals appears.

Buyers need to understand that many of their expectations are out of the seller's hands. The birds talking ability, for example, might be great when at the breeder's. But if the buyer never talks to the bird, how can it learn? The airline could drop the bird in transit, leave it outside in freezing weather or send it to where lost luggage goes. Cage doors have been opened by freight handlers and the birds released. No seller can possibly guarantee an absolute safe arrival.

Pre-sales contracts will hopefully clear up future potential problems. But the seller should try to ascertain what the client is looking for. One client bought a macaw only to discover that she was not allowed to keep the bird in her apartment. She should have determined this before buying the bird. This is not the seller's problem.

Services

What special things will the breeder provide for the buyer that might help them?

They can include:

- Veterinary health checks of the bird before selling. This typically includes a full physical, complete blood work, cultures of cloaca and choanal, screening the birds for viruses or giving them vaccinations, wing and nail trims (if requested).
- Sexing the bird.
- Providing unrelated stock for breeding.

- Information on bird care. This can be verbal or with a "Bird Care Guide" that the breeder can provide to clients.
- Referrals to others such as bird behaviorists for additional information.
- Willingness to ship the bird.
- Allowing on site visits of the breeder's facility so the buyers may see the birds they are interested in buying.
- Bird carriers for the buyer to take the bird home in.
- Providing follow up on the bird to make sure it is adjusting to its new home.

Conclusion

Without successful marketing of surplus birds the breeder is unable to continue to finance the many needs of his or her breeding operation. Continuing costs of feed, aviaries and birds requires the breeder to sell birds in order to pay the bills. Successful marketing is the ability to join the person who needs to sell with the person who wants to buy.

References

- Ring, L. 1992. Birds and the Law. Proceedings of the Seminar on Breeding, Rearing and Marketing Exotic Birds. Avian Research Fund, Concord, Calif. Feb. 1 and 2, 1992 pp 149-166.
- Ring, L. 1992. Birds and the Law. Proceedings Assoc. of Avian Medicine Avicultural Seminar, Manual of Avicultural Medicine and Management. New Orleans, LA. Sept. 5th, 1992 pp AB3-1 to AB3-11. c




**Absolutely Aussie**

A unique business that specializes in and features a full range of quality merchandise for bird owners, enthusiasts and nature lovers.
285 Liberty Street, NE #210 • Salem, OR 97301
Call (503) 585-3395 • fax (503) 585-3574
www.absolutelyaussie.com

Specializing in rare mutations,
and lovable, healthy, handfed babies.

Eric Antheunisse

**CEDAR HILL
BIRD
ENTERPRISES**



More than 70
species of birds
30 types of Conures, 8 types of Cockatoos
Macaws, Amazons & much more!
(707) 578-3976
3442 Primrose Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95407