

## Featured Guest Interviews

### Corinna Bench (@slfarms2, sharedlegacyfarms.com)

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**Corinna Bench:** [00:00:00] My name's Corinna Bench. I am first and foremost, a CSA farmer at Shared Legacy Farms, which is out in Elmore, Ohio. We've been in business since 2008. We run a 425 members CSA.

[00:00:13] My husband and I were certified organic vegetable farm. And I also help farmers, other CSA farmers like myself, get more confident in marketing and messaging and sales. And so I have a side gig called My Digital Farmer, where I essentially teach those skills of how to attract customers, engage with them, get them to become super fans and how to build offers all this kind of stuff, all the marketing and messaging.

[00:00:39] So that is actually my favorite part of what I do now. I just love empowering other farmers to get more confident in their marketing.

**Diego Footer:** [00:00:47] Sure. Hey, in terms of super fans, you probably have a bunch. 425-member CSA, that's on the larger side in terms of people that I've talked to in the past. And one thing we were talking about earlier before we started recording was, lot of people have this question of how do I get more customers?

[00:01:03] I think they're thinking, oh, it'd be like Corinna, I want a 425-member CSA. How do I get there? But you're saying, I wonder why people think that. I think they, instead, should be more thinking about how they can take better care of the customers that they have. Can you elaborate on that?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:01:19] Yeah. When I first started out farming, I, too, felt like the way that I needed to make more revenue was simply to fill my pipeline with more leads and more customers.

[00:01:29] If I could just grow my customer base, I would make more money. That is one way to do it, but that takes an awfully long time. And what I have discovered over the last 14 years, actually relatively recently, is that if you take good care of the customers that you already have and you over-serve them, and you'd really take the time to develop a relationship with those people,

[00:01:54] they actually want to buy more things from you, and that's actually where you maximize your profits. So many farmers make the mistake of thinking, oh, I just have to get more and more people in my audience. And that's how I'll make more money.

[00:02:06] When in fact, you do still need to find new customers, I'm not saying you don't do that, but, the way that you really monetize and maximize your profits is by cultivating the customer into a super fan and then just continuing to build more and more offers.

[00:02:21] Give them more things to buy, and they'll keep coming back. And the average order value just increases exponentially over time. But you do have to take the time to cultivate that relationship.

[00:02:31] And I think a lot of business owners miss that. They just take that first purchase, that second purchase, and don't realize that they actually have to build a, you know like a trust factor with their customers when they do that.

[00:02:43] And they make their focus on that. Then those customers fall in love with you. They want to support you. They're like, what else can I buy from you? And that's where you need to... That's where you end up making your profits.

**Diego Footer:** [00:02:54] When you look at customers of farms, and I think farms are relatively small businesses, customer-wise.

[00:03:03] 425 members in your CSA, very different than, even a large brick and mortar retailer that might have that many people walk into the store in an hour. Like they can't cultivate those relationships.

[00:03:14] When you think about farms and having a pretty concise assistant customer base, a loyal customers, what do you think goes into cultivating and building those relationships? 'Cause it sounds like, oh, that's easy.

[00:03:25] Just cultivate and do it, but I think that's even where people get stuck. Does that mean I'm just sending out more emails. What is cultivating a relationship mean to you?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:03:35] Oh, that's a good question. So you really have to think about your, every customer that enters your sphere of influence goes through a journey.

[00:03:43] They go through a process and when they first get to know—it's dating. When they first, when you first meet someone, you don't just get down on one knee and say, will you marry me? You have to take the time to introduce yourself, see if they like you see if you like them. See if you click.

[00:03:58] And then if you do, you keep moving along and progressing in the relationship. And there's a very similar kind of thing going on with the customer. When you're creating marketing materials or trying to create a brand, first year on the front end of this relationship, you're really just trying to put out content in social media.

[00:04:16] For example, that's going to attract your perfect client, the one that you actually really want to cultivate and you want more of. And so, I think that's one strategy to begin with, where you're thinking about what are the kinds of pictures that I'm posting on social media.

[00:04:29] What are the videos that I'm doing? What are the words that go along with that social media to try and show what I value and what matters to me? Taking pictures of your face, the face of the farmer and the people behind the food, right?

[00:4:44] Like, I know what to put on social media now to attract my ideal client because I've been doing this for long enough. I've researched my customers. I know what it is that drives them. And so I speak that language, hoping that more of those kinds of people will find me.

[00:04:59] So I think that's step one is understanding who is your perfect client. I really like doing the research to figure if you could clone one person, what is that person like? What do they value? What do they think? What are the words going on in their head, and then trying to create marketing materials and content on your social media, just as one example, that will attract them.

[00:05:20] Once they start to follow you then, and then that takes a while, they take several months sometimes just following you, then they might actually go and meet you. They might come into your store, and they might go to the farmer's market, and they feel like they know you a little bit because they've seen your face on social media and now they're meeting you, face-to-face in person.

[00:05:37] And then you try to get them to buy the first thing. You're trying to have an experience with you to change that relationship from just watching you from a distance to now, I'm going to actually spend money with you, and hopefully that's a positive first experience.

[00:05:51] So there's this initial attraction strategy. Then you want to get them on your email list, get them so interested in you, they're like, I want to keep buying from this person. So either you capture that email when they make that first purchase or you create some strategies, to what I would think things that I call like lead magnets online.

[00:06:08] But try to get them to give you their email address in return for something. And then you can cultivate that relationship further through an email strategy, that over time eventually turns them into a person that might actually buy from you on a regular basis.

[00:06:24] But not everyone, Diego, is going to stay in that funnel. And I think that's important. Like you have to realize as a business that it's okay if some people come in and then eventually fall away. And if you do your job right in your messaging and in your marketing, if you know the kind of person you actually want to keep in the long run, you're going to be okay with attracting and repelling.

[00:06:43] And the ones that do fall away probably aren't your perfect client. So you have to understand who is it that I serve, who, what's my niche market in our case, we're a CSA, and we're very targeted. So it makes it easy for us with our messaging.

[00:06:57] If you have a broader scope and lots of different outlets, it's a little bit trickier, right? To zone in on that one message that is going to appeal to several different kinds of groups of people.

**Diego Footer:** [00:07:09] So if I'm hearing you, and maybe tell me if I'm not—if you don't agree with this—businesses maybe are at different stages. When you're starting up a farm-based business, the primary goal at that point is you got to get some sales going.

[00:07:22] You've got to build that customer base up to size, and eventually, the size of the customer base is large enough to support the business, given how large you want the business to be. And then you can shift that communication a little bit to keeping those customers around.

[00:07:39] It's less about getting more, it's more about keeping them. So initially, it's, let's just try and get a bunch because we don't have any, but now that we have some, it's, let's really focus on these ones and try and get them to become like you said, super fans.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:07:54] Yeah. You don't become this super awesome, amazing marketing machine in one year. That's—there's probably a few outliers that can do that, but yeah, in the first beginning stages, you don't exactly know what your customer wants, and you're throwing a lot of things at the wall and seeing what sticks.

[00:08:11] You're practicing some of your different messaging, and you're trying to figure out who is even getting attracted to me? Who are the people that are coming and checking me out? And as you begin to cultivate those clients, and you start to see pattern—and you'll start to see patterns in some of those big buyers, the ones that keep coming back and really liking you.

[00:08:29] And that does take, in our case, that took us a few years to figure out what that was, what those people were like and what they valued. At the beginning of your business, yeah, you are really just trying to sell something like, you do need to make money, but I would also argue that one of your primary jobs in the early stages of your business is to grow your email list.

[00:08:48] And really, to try to create content that will attract your ideal client and get them onto your email list so that you can slowly grow them and build that relationship with them over email.

**Diego Footer:** [00:09:03] Yeah, because email is viewed as more of a direct connection to the customer than somebody glancing at social media posts, which I think primarily for a lot of farms is Instagram these days.

[00:09:13] And where farms I think sometimes can get stuck is they're posting stuff. They're building an Instagram following, converting them over to email, getting them to leave the Instagram platform to come onto your platform, your website.

[00:09:29] What have you found or what would be some ways you think people can incentivize people to click off Instagram and to click through to your website?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:09:41] First of all, I'm going to just argue that I don't think that Instagram is necessarily the gateway to sales. I feel like the—probably the number one way that you're going to get new customers is through referrals.

[00:09:53] And that's at least what I teach my clients. Does that mean I don't have an Instagram strategy? Of course I do, but I think that what you really want to focus on in the early stages of your business is really wowing your customers, your first customers, over delivering over serving, giving them an amazing product so much so that they can't help but talk about it with other people.

[00:10:16] And maybe even going so far as to give them tools that make it easy for them to share your platform or your business with someone else. Maybe it's, if you're at the farmer's market for instance, and they just keep coming back and getting your stuff like you're dropping in a little note, a little business card, every single time.

[00:10:31] And maybe there's even an incentive. Maybe there's like a referral coupon code, refer a friend and get \$5 off. Like maybe it's worth actually spending that kind of an investment in order to acquire a customer, a new customer, because the people that love your product, they know other people like themselves who will probably love your product, too.

[00:10:51] That's how many CSA farms grow in the early years, it's primarily through referrals. So that's actually where I would argue for people to start.

**Diego Footer:** [00:11:01] But how do you get the initial customers to do the referring? If you're not at a farmer's market, and you're in an area, there's some sphere of people that you get in and they can recommend so many people, but eventually like that hits a ceiling.

[00:11:15] And if you go through your networks, and you're at 50, then I think you're turning online because it just is a way to reach people. So how do you get that audience to do the referring?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:11:29] Yeah, so I mean, we're not just solely relying on referrals, but I think that referrals is probably the number one way that you build your customer base in the early years.

[00:11:41] But you absolutely should be on social media because social media is that... I look at social media as my primary awareness building platform and engagement building platform. So in those first couple of early steps of the, what I call the customer value journey, I'm putting content out into the world that's going to attract my ideal clients.

[00:12:03] Doing videos out in the field, taking gorgeous pictures of the food that I'm making and what it looks like in my kitchen, taking beautiful pictures of vegetables from the field, those kinds of things that provide—even if I Facebook ad them, right?

[00:12:15] Like, those kinds of things are going to draw the eye for the people that are interested in that sort of thing, that value that stuff, and that will pull them in. And then I ultimately start trying to get them to download some kind of a lead magnet, for instance, that maybe my A to Z vegetable storage guide, you can get this awesome storage guide.

[00:12:30] It's going to show you how to store every vegetable. Just give me your email address, and you can have it. So those are some of the online strategies that will eventually work on the people that have been watching me for a while, maybe they've subscribed to my channel.

[00:12:44] Maybe they DM'ed me on Instagram, or they watch my stories and they're like, this is so cool. And every now and then I drop this opportunity to grab a download and/or get on my email list. And eventually, if it's the right person, they'll take that bait and they'll get onto my email list.

[00:13:01] I will also say that there is a follow-up strategy that I teach people, too. Once you get on the email list, you don't just—they're not just on your email list and that's it. But, I actually have created in our business, we've created an onboarding email sequence and this is like a...

[00:13:19] It does go out every week for about two months. This is pre-written content that's designed to give away amazing ideas, tips, tricks, strategies, and introduce them to my brand and my products and stories of people who buy my products, to help them start to feel like they're a part of my tribe and that they want to maybe be a part of that tribe.

[00:13:42] And so by the time that's done, that two-month period, now they've really been exposed to not only my stuff on social media, but they've been getting a weekly email from me for two months.

[00:13:53] That sounds like I'm writing just to them. And if they're my person, they will continue to open those emails. They'll find those emails so valuable, they're actually going to look forward to the next time that I write one.

[00:14:06] So when that initial like, onboarding process is done, then they get switched over to my regular, just weekly email that I send to my whole list that isn't necessarily the onboarding sequence. But now they're starting to continue to hear my stories every week. And that, that's really working well for us.

**Diego Footer:** [00:14:24] If we go back to what we were initially talking about, it's easier to...not easier, maybe it's a preferred way in your opinion, to add things to sell to existing customers than it is to get new customers.

[00:14:41] If you look at adding new things to sell, there's some dollar component. There's some time component to doing that. There's some dollar component, there's some time component to adding new customers.

[00:14:56] So if you're encouraging the primer, the first one, you must think that it's easier to add something to give to a customer than it is to add a new customer.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:15:10] Oh, for sure. This is just data that over time, a farmer becomes aware of that. At least in our case, the cost of acquiring a customer in most businesses is very high. If you just think about the amount, even just for a Facebook ad, like the amount of money that you spend for a lead.

[00:15:29] It could be \$20. It could be \$25. I don't know. It depends on the business. And the time that it takes to warm that person up to make them decide they're finally ready to buy from you, all of that is put into the cost of acquiring a customer.

[00:15:42] It is not easy to get someone to finally buy from you for the first time. It takes time. And in some cases, it takes money for them to finally be emotionally ready to make that decision. So I don't take that lightly. Once I've acquired a customer, I'm like, Ooh, that was big.

[00:15:58] I worked hard to get that person. And so when I think about, now that I've got that person, and they're hopefully somewhat bought in, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that they stay in love with me so that I don't lose them.

[00:16:13] In the world of CSA, like retention is such a huge conversation because so many farms struggle with keeping their CSA filled, like 40% of their people leave. That's a lot of people to replace every year.



[00:16:27] But if we do a really good job of attracting the right person from the get-go because we've got a strong attraction process, then when they're finally in our ecosystem and they like it, and we do a great job of serving them to the point that they become a super fan...

[00:16:42] Then now, they're like ripe and ready for you to just keep giving them things to purchase. So whether it's retention in the sense of, will you be in my CSA again this year, that becomes an easier ask and easier yes for them, if they've had an amazing experience and you've done a good job of—you've taken that time to develop resources, to cultivate that connection.

[00:17:05] As opposed to taking that time and only spending it over here to build new customers. If you shift some of that time over here and just take care of the ones you have, not only are you going to make them feel like a million bucks, they're going to succeed with your product, now, they're like, ready. What else do you have? What do you have?

[00:17:20] What else do you have for me? And it's, I think it's so much easier to just be like, how about you shop at my online store every week and buy additional vegetables that I can bring along with your CSA bin, that right? Like that's what's happening for us. I have customers every week, they go and buy more stuff to add to their CSA bin.

[00:17:37] Or I have a Thanksgiving share that I—we did an ice cream share, a bread share. We did an affiliate partnership with Citizen Salmon Alaska. So now we're giving them fish, and we're getting a commission cut from that.

[00:17:50] We're just continuing to find ways to give them more products, farm dinners, you name it. And that's just, then the question is just, what else can I come up with? Or what, how can I bundle my products in a different way? Because whatever I come up with, many of them are going to say yes to cause they just want to support me.

**Diego Footer:** [00:18:09] Work-wise, arguably, that's as much work as trying to get a new customer, no?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:18:15] It might be. It might be, Diego, but the work that's involved in signing a new customer, you don't make a lot of money off of those people on the first stages. You might spend 25, 30, \$35 to get them, but then it takes them a while to turn into a super fan.

[00:18:31] So, I would like to shift some of my time over here to making them super fans because then, just...the sky's the limit. I just want to say the sky's the limit, but you can really, you can make the money faster over on the people that you've taken care of.

**Diego Footer:** [00:18:47] I'm hearing you, and I'm with you. I'm following you. I see it as, especially in a CSA model where one customer's business is worth so much. And I hear about the CSA turnover and retention rate and all that, that, yeah, your primary goal, get them to come back because the next sale is just the same thing they've already bought.

[00:19:09] They're just buying it again. And then the outer ring of that is okay, great. They're coming back. Now, let's also buy something additional beyond that. But first let's get them to come back 'cause if they don't come back, they're not going to buy anything additional. And that's all—the whole theory falls apart.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:19:26] Yeah. It's all about the average lifetime customer value. That's the number that I'm looking at. I'm looking at average order value in the cart as well. Of course. But I look at this as a long game. I'm looking at a customer and thinking lifetime value.

[00:19:43] Like, this person stays with me 10 years. And if each person spends, I don't know, like a thousand dollars with me a year, and I have, 400 of them, like, that's a lot of money. If I can get them to spend that much with me in a year, I'm willing to spend the time to work on that.

[00:20:03] This whole idea of a thousand true fans or a hundred true fans. Like, you can find a true fan and get them to spend a thousand dollars with you a year. All you need is a hundred, and you've made a whole lot of money, right?

[00:20:14] So it's trying to figure out how can I turn these people into super fans who will stay with me for life? And it's not just the value—it's not just the monetary value that they're bringing you. It's there's the connection. There's this compensation that's happening as a farmer for us because we're connecting with them. They care about us.

[00:20:34] They do nice things for us. They have our backs, especially in the CSA model. Like when they're bought in, they will do, they will go to the mat for you if something happens, and that's only happening because we're taking the time to really get to know them and take good care of them.

[00:20:52] Not to mention that once you can get a person to the super fan status, they are talking about you. They are your brand ambassador. And you don't even have to ask them to be because they've been so wild by your service that that's where that exponential growth starts to happen. The referrals system is in place because you have overserved and over-delivered.

**Diego Footer:** [00:21:17] When you think about over-serving, over delivering the super fans, there's ways I think that's built. First, you have product quality, so you take care of that, that's good to go.

[00:21:28] And you have customer service, just how they interact, just doing business with you, not above and beyond just, Hey, when we talk, this is what it's like.

[00:21:36] So there's those two things. We take those out, assume those are given. Those are 10 out of tens, we've handled those. Now, there's the above and beyond, cultivating the relationship building. On one hand, we have this world that feels like I'm getting too much in my inbox. I don't want to be bothered.

[00:21:56] How much do you think a farmer should try and cultivate that fandom beyond those two cores of customer service and product quality in value with just touching and stuff. At some point, I feel like it can just be uhh, I'm just, you're overwhelming the people.

[00:22:17] Where's that balance between you're giving them information, and I don't mean just the passive stuff. Like you're also doing this on social media, so there, they can passively opt into the story. The more active things to build a customer base, where's that line between too much and too little?



**Corinna Bench:** [00:22:36] Yeah. I think that's a question that is every farmer's going to have to figure out for themselves in our case, it's a weekly touchpoint.

[00:22:43] So I have a weekly email, and if there are people that get annoyed by my weekly email, they'll unsubscribe, and I'm okay with that. Those are not my people. If they're annoyed by hearing from me, I don't blast them with salesy messages every single week. Like a lot of my stuff is anecdotal stories of the farm.

[00:23:02] I get emails from people telling me about—they love reading my emails, which is just blows me away. Anyway, but, so I feel like if there are people who don't like them, they probably not my people. And it's okay. If they fall away from my list, I'm willing to let that happen.

[00:23:18] I think that to go back to your original kind of question of we want to have a great quality product, that's important. We want to have great basic customer service. Like what we tell them they're going to get is what they get. But I think another thing that really cements someone, there's a couple of things that come to mind, actually.

[00:23:38] One of them is the community. So, if they feel like you're attracting a tribe, for lack of a better word, that looks like them, right? Acts like them, that has the same values as them. We all have this desire to belong. And when we find our group of people that love to cook that share pictures of everything they make in the kitchen, and nobody thinks they're weird.

[00:24:05] Where are you? Yeah. You find other people who think like you that's part of what we're also cultivating as a brand. We're trying to let people know, like here's the why behind our business. And that can be very attractive. I always tell people that they'll originally buy your product for like, maybe the quality, but they'll stay for the company.

[00:24:27] And so if we can do a good job as a brand of making them feel like they're a part of a bigger thing and that they actually belong in this group, this is a manifestation of their why. So that's one thing that I spend some time in my brand actively cultivating. I also think that it's important as a business to do a really good job of fixing...

[00:24:50] The, what I call moments of misery. So when you have customer service moments where you screwed up in some way that you go above and beyond and make it right, but then knock their socks off and amaze them with another form of generosity. 'Cause they're not expecting—they're expecting you to hopefully make it right.

[00:25:11] But when you go above and beyond that and make them feel seen and heard and they're amazing and they're valuable to you because now you've given them like \$10 in store credit to, or you've given them a freebie as an, I'm sorry, I screwed up. I've just found that has ended up making an impression, and they just think the world of me when I overserve in that capacity, too.

[00:25:32] So just creating a process for, Hey, when you do make a mistake with a customer, 'cause we all will, whether I forgot your fruit share, I'm sorry. Or I messed up your store order or your arugula had holes in it. But there's an, I am ready to step in and be generous and say, I'm going to make that right.

[00:25:51] And then, when I do, that seems to cement people in it. I call it turning a moment of misery into a moment of magic. It's almost a formula to the point that I almost feel like whenever I make a mistake, I turn them into a super fan.

**Diego Footer:** [00:26:06] Yeah, the unintentional intentional mistake.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:26:08] I know, let's make more mistakes.

**Diego Footer:** [00:26:09] Yeah. The idea of building that community. I think where maybe people struggle is like, they're just not creative enough. Like they don't, for some reason, it's we got out of elementary school, we stopped doing fun art. We stop writing crazy stories.

[00:26:27] And when it comes time as a business to send an email, I think people default to the basics. Here's what's in the basket this week. Here's a picture of it. Here's a recipe. They come across as sterile.

[00:26:45] What, just how do people make better emails? And I know that sounds like a basic question, but I think like, people just need some inspiration to think and just, "not be afraid to fail," is probably the best way to put it because I think maybe people are scared to say, I don't want to tell this story, it's too personal. Or, the customer doesn't care about the beautiful lady bug that I saw. What do you think? What are your thoughts on that?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:27:11] I think learning how to write a good email is a skill like any other that you have to learn how to do. And if people who are listening to this are thinking, I am not good at that, I hear ya.

[00:27:24] There was a point in my life where I felt like that way, too. And you have to just be willing to go out there and practice. There are some best practices that you learn when you...I've taken courses from copywriters to try and get better at this. And there are little tricks of the trade that they know about what hooks a reader.

[00:27:43] Or what makes someone keep scrolling and reading the email. So there's some things that you can learn, but a lot of it is just practicing and you're not going to be great at it at first, but the more that you do it, you just have to be committed to making it a thing that you're going to do.

[00:27:59] And the more you do it, the more you find your voice. The more you find what the things are that you talk about, what are the things that people are responding to. And if you get emails back from someone to a little story that you told them, that, Hey, that works really well. I should tell another story about being a parent.

[00:28:18] Sometimes my emails aren't even about the vegetables. Something that I dealt with that week as a parent, for example. And, I just kinda tell that, and then maybe in a PS, I'm like, Hey, by the way, my online store's open, you can go check it out here.

[00:28:32] But people like to hear that I'm a human being, that I'm normal like they are. And that I have stories that happened in my life just like them. And that's why, we talked earlier about finding community. Like when you, as a person, as the person of your brand show up and connect with them.

[00:28:49] Tell stories that make them realize she's just like me. He's just like me, or she thinks like this. He values this. Every single one of those has the potential to just move a person closer and closer. I think it's just looking at your life, taking a look at your week.

[00:29:05] I keep track because I do this every week. I have my radar up all week long. I'm looking for the story. I'm looking for either the tip, that the thing that—the aha moment that I think my customer will be amazed by, or sometimes it's a life lesson, the parable from the farmer is what I like to talk, what would I like to call it. So those are the two buckets that I am always on the lookout for.

[00:29:32] I wasn't always a farmer. Like I was a city girl, actually a suburb girl, who married a farmer. And that first year or two being married with the stuff that I saw happening on the farm, blew my mind. I like, I had no idea that lettuce, if you didn't cut it, will just keep growing straight up and into this huge tower.

[00:29:50] Okay, so that's a story that I know my customers will think is cool because I thought it was. And I, so I know my people, 'cause I was them once. So I'm looking out for things like that, little stories that will amaze them or be aha's, or it could be a how to use my product kind of story.

[00:30:08] Hey, I just learned this. This is so neat. I want to share it with you. Yeah, so those aha, learning tips, tricks, but also the wise farmer. So I grew up in ministry. I was a youth minister for 12 years. I did a lot of preaching. I did a lot of, what do you call them? Object lessons, like children's sermon X, where I had to find a prop and they come up with a message behind it.

[00:30:32] So I've had a lot of practice in that. And I look for those kinds of things, those parables, those wise moments, that things that have happened to me. And how can I turn this into a lesson at the end? So I just tell the story in the email.

[00:30:46] And at the end, I have a question that makes them think about what does this mean for me. So those are my two, you asked me, like, how do you write better emails? Like those are my two buckets and categories that I tend to fall back on the most. And then periodically I do have a email that is purely promotional.

[00:31:04] Hey, I have a farm dinner coming up, lalalalala, here are the details, but I mostly try to do tips, tricks, strategies, aha moments, and then the wise farmer kind of parables.

**Diego Footer:** [00:31:15] Yeah. I love that. And it just reminds me of, I think this is a Stephen King quote, He said something like, in order to write, you have to write poorly first.

[00:31:23] So somebody has got to start. And I think people, they need this unique combination—and this is not easy to arrive at—of owning it and being vulnerable. And I think that's just really hard for people to get to of this is who I am unapologetically, and when I go there, I'm also going to share parts of me that somebody might say, I don't like it.

[00:31:49] I disagree. You suck. Or some level of bad on there, but then you got to go back to this, like the circle of, well, you own it. It's you, and people have trouble getting in that zone.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:32:04] I think you're tapping into something there. I think a lot of us are afraid to share the deeper parts of ourselves, because we're secretly worried that it will cause some of the people to be repelled by it.

[00:32:18] I can't believe they shared that or like for me, like I'm a deeply faithful person, and I often struggle with the, can I talk about my faith? Can I talk about God, or can I say, I'm praying for you? Can I say stuff like that or is that going to annoy some people, right?

[00:32:32] And more and more I'm like, you know what, that's who I am. That is a part of me. And if it does offend people, that's my voice, that's me, and they're not my people. And so I think we just have to really embrace and acknowledge, accept who we are, become kind of self-aware.

[00:32:47] This is who I am, and not be afraid to put some of that out there because when we tell those stories about ourself, and I don't go crazy with my deep personal stuff, but if we do that wisely, it will cause the person who's reading it to feel empathy and to be like, oh man, that's really cool that she shared that with me, or that's pretty cool that she was a backpack guide in the Rockies.

[00:33:10] Like that's neat, like those little moments and anecdotes can become powerful connectors and some cement the relationship and more yeah. You might lose a few people, but they're going to attract the right person, and make them even stronger and more loyal.

**Diego Footer:** [00:33:27] Yeah. I think what's distilling out of this episode is at the end of the day, we're all people. And it's about connecting with other people. And once you build that connection, I think those connections are hard to sever.

[00:33:40] Life can sever them so many moves away or something else happens or something bad enough happens by either side to sever that bond. But we're people and I think too much of business gets boiled down to where customers are customers and it's just their numbers on spreadsheets.

[00:33:59] They're avatars and we forget to make these connections. So when people say, how do I get more customers? I think one, it's going to take time for the most part, unless you have this hugely in-demand product, like people aren't just going to come running in the door.

[00:34:17] If it's just an average product yet there's people that want it and you know how to reach them. It's going to take time to build the communication with them, build that customer base. And then to do that, it's just taking it down to a human level.

[00:34:32] If we were going to talk at a party or meet on the street or meet at church or meet at the farmer's market, it's just conversations, and it's not always about, hey just buy these cucumbers. Sometimes it's like, how are your kids doing? That type of thing, and that's where those bonds are forged, and they last a long time.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:34:51] You know, I would even argue, I love what you just said. And I would even argue that what a customer really wants from a farmer isn't just their vegetables. There is this other, deeper thing that's going on inside of them, where they are hoping to get to know the farmer.

[00:35:09] I think there's this idyllic—there's this idyllic thing going on in our customers' heads of, I want to live vicariously through this farmer. I have this idea of what it means to be a farmer. Living out on the prairies, and the people person, friendly. And so they want to get to know you.

[00:35:24] And so if you do that and you learn their names and you learn something about their families, like something, some deeper need is actually happening there. I look at my mother-in-law who's, now 65 years old, she's the hub of her community.

[00:35:39] Everybody comes to her roadside stand, has been coming to her roadside stand for years, and she's like this huge networker, like, I think about a wheel and she's the center of the wheel. And she knows all the people and she knows what's going on.

[00:35:51] Sometimes she makes them meet and talk to each other, connects them to their next resources, she's this amazing individual. And I think farmers have that potential in them. There's this legacy from way back that's what we are. We're we know everyone, we're the connector of all people.

[00:36:08] And so we need to embrace that, right? Like we need to remember that it is about getting to know our people and seeing them as human. That's what they want from us. They don't just want us to be a purveyor of vegetables.

[00:36:20] They actually want to like, know their farmer. So when we can help them achieve that goal, we've just hit a touchpoint in their heart, and now they're loyal.

**Diego Footer:** [00:36:31] Yeah, like that farm stands, an example of communities are resilient and more dynamic than just a superficial transaction where it's just I bought something from you on Craigslist, it's over, we're done.

[00:36:42] And if the business survives through community, the marketing you're doing, the communication you're all doing is this fostering community. And I don't think there's wrong right or wrong answers necessarily in there because every community's different.

[00:36:58] And if you're really trying to coalesce this community and build it up, you're not gonna offend a lot of people along the way. I think generally people are gonna go along with that. And then eventually, hey, you have those super fans, you have.

[00:37:15] If you look at all of this, for people that were initially asking the question, I'm selling online, my biggest problem is how do I get more customers? What's the take home for them?

**Corinna Bench:** [00:37:39] I would back up and say, that's just a symptom, but what is the real problem is the problem that you're not making enough revenue. And so, you think that in order to make more revenue, you have to get more customers or is it that you literally don't have any customers?

[00:37:54] If you have customers already, just take a look and see, am I really taking good care of them? 'Cause if I put a little bit more of my time into that, not saying you close off the pipeline, of course we have to cultivate the plan. But if we shift our focus and find ways to build community with the ones who have already made that mental shift and started buying from me, spending money with me, and we start to find ways to connect either with them and

give them more things that might, do the work that's required of starting to build your pipeline.

[00:38:24] If you can create a really strong super fan base, they will start to become your marketing platform. And you'll find that you almost don't have to worry about like, building pipelines because those customers build your pipeline, and they take care of bringing those new leads in.

[00:38:44] So I would just ask first, Hey, if you're like, oh, I need more customers. Are you saying that because you need more money? If that's what's kinda going on in your head and just like pivot and say, what if the way to get more revenue is actually to offer more things to my customers that I already have?

**Diego Footer:** [00:39:03] Ah, that's brilliant. And through your brand, My Digital Farmer, you have a lot of great resources, the podcast, free courses, paid courses. Talk a little bit about the education you do and where people can learn more about that.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:39:18] Yeah. I have a podcast it's called the My Digital Farmer podcast and that's probably the best way to get started with me. I have over a hundred episodes now, so you can just look that up and take a listen.

[00:39:28] See if you find some topics that are valuable, you'll be able to figure out within a couple of episodes if you like my style of teaching. And if you find what I have to say valuable. So that's probably the first place that I would recommend people get started with my brand.

[00:39:40] You can also check out my website at [mydigitalfarmer.com](http://mydigitalfarmer.com). I have several courses and free workshops that I offer, that you can just go and learn specific skills and how to build the different elements and the different systems in your online business.

[00:39:56] That's where I would recommend you take a look.

**Diego Footer:** [00:40:00] All right. There we go. Perfect. That's it.

**Corinna Bench:** [00:40:02] Awesome.

**Diego Footer:** [00:40:03] All right. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

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