

THE 10

Elaine Luther, professor of business management for Point Park University, offers some tips on consumer marketing for food. She has 14 years of work experience at three Fortune 500 corporations — PepsiCo., Allied-Signal (now part of Honeywell) and Schering-Plough.

1 Taste tests work: Be sure to offer opportunities to sample new products. Use in-store demonstrations, significant coupon values or money-back guarantees.

2 Don't conceal price hikes through creative packaging: Consumers do notice. Either raise the price, or clearly indicate the amounts are smaller. Otherwise it feels like a trick or a lie.

3 Offer healthy options but don't mislead: Consumers want safe and healthy products when they see the "organic" label.

4 Fix the packaging: Tamper evident is different that tamper proof. Consumers do not want to use toolboxes to open packages. Especially annoying are "resealable" packages impossible to open without shredding.

5 Clearly label expiration dates: Some are in code or get torn off when packages are opened.

6 Don't hide high calories by setting unrealistic portion sizes: Consumers recognize few people are going to eat just eight small crackers.

7 List ingredient sources: There are many reasons why consumers like local sources for food; most are related to safety and qual-

ity. And they are probably willing to pay more to get what they want.

8 Quality trumps price: Customers are willing to pay more for quality. Look at Whole Foods.

9 Let the consumer decide what's available: Often, consumer favorites disappear because another vendor offers a deal to a retailer. Food retailers seldom have a mechanism for picking up this unsatisfied demand.

10 New and improved often isn't: Don't strive for additional market share by ignoring the taste preferences of existing customers.

