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**In the Trenches: Promote Idaho potato quality, presentation and value**

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By

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What produce item is long, cylindrical, heavily netted and popular with consumers? If you guessed the Russet Burbank potato, you were correct. It became the most extensively farmed potato variety in the United States, especially in Idaho.

If you were to hold up a Russet potato in your hand and ask ten people at random to identify the variety, how would they respond? Most would probably say it is an "Idaho" potato. That's because most people often associate Russets with Idaho potatoes. It's a common assumption.

Shoppers can often be heard asking a produce manager, "Where are the Idaho baking potatoes?" Others will point at a display of Russets and ask, "How much are these Idaho potatoes?" Hardly ever do we hear a shopper say, "Do you have any Russet Burbank potatoes?" Today, consumers can easily identify Idaho potatoes by the Grown in Idaho logo, which can be seen on packages, bags, boxes and display signs.

Most consumers often associate Russet potatoes with Idaho.

It is not uncommon to hear a person refer to an Idaho Russet as a baking potato, even though this variety is well-suited for mashing and other uses. The Russet Burbank is also highly popular for making French-fried potatoes.

Don't make selling complicated. Boost your Idaho potato volume by sticking to some simple merchandising methods in the produce department.

- **Use end caps:** One of the prime locations to display produce is on the end caps. These areas are highly visible and heavily shopped as customers walk around the tables from one side to the other. They are excellent locations to set up massive displays of bagged Idaho potatoes. Display them on a table end cap for greater selling power.
- **Go for incremental sales:** Raise your average sales volume. Do some upselling by building large wing displays of bulk Idaho potatoes alongside a table end cap or freestanding in an open aisle. Use empty original potato cartons for the base and stack them against the table end. Dummy the top boxes 50 percent to control shrink and fill the display by neatly stacking potatoes with expert artanship.
- **Add a spillover:** This method spills your display onto original boxes for that extra selling punch. This will draw attention to shoppers and creates buying excitement. Place empty Idaho potato cartons in front of your regular display with the labels facing up. You can also add paper bales onto the boxes for extra appeal as though they just came off the truck. Dummy top boxes using the same method as the wing display and stock with plenty of product. Put some clout into it.

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If you build a nice aggressive end cap display of Idaho potatoes on purpose without advertising them, you will still move four times the normal amount and enjoy the clear extra profit. Although price is important, the overall impact of a massive and aggressive display will drive sales every time.

Use your selling skills and enthusiasm to double and triple Idaho potato sales by focusing on impactful merchandising. This can easily be accomplished by use of those muscle displays

Since 87 percent of customers plan to purchase potatoes before they even step into the produce department, it is not necessary to give them away. Price them to generate gross profit. Display Idaho Russets as the focal point in the potato section since they convey premium quality on a consistent basis. Drive volume sales with massive off-shelf auxiliary displays in an entrance location. Also, upsell on large sized bulk Idaho Russets stacked with excellent workmanship on wing displays and table ends.

I personally feel Idaho potatoes are a brand. They are of superior quality, very resilient, and are so well known that shoppers request them by name.

Idaho potatoes already have brand awareness. The best quality produce will make you the most profit. Idaho potato quality raises its value and lessens consumer sensitivity to price.

Don't give Idaho potatoes away. Big discounts are not necessary. Wise merchandising is the key to success. To earn incremental profit, set up a secondary display of five- and 10-pound bags of Idaho potatoes at the regular retail. You will sell a greater amount and boost your profit obligation expected by management.

Remember, your company is not in the volume business; it's in the profit business. If you lower your potato price just 10 percent, you'll need to sell 33 percent more just to break even. Breaking even is not in any company's budget.

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