

Got the Goods?

What's your potential as a direct marketer? Test yourself by honestly answering these straightforward questions:

- Am I good at bookkeeping and paperwork?
- How do I feel about being a salesman, either on the phone or in person? Do I enjoy meeting and talking to people?
- Am I good at taking care of details?
- Do I need to be paid immediately or can I wait to collect my money?
- How forceful can I be at making people pay what they owe me, or otherwise do what they have agreed to do?
- Can I stick with one task, week after week, year after year, or do I quickly become bored and need frequent change?
- Am I willing and physically able to do the extra work and commit the additional time to run a direct marketing operation? Or do I prefer to put the boat away and forget about fish at the end of the day or the season?
- Is my family supportive of this change, and can they make any necessary adjustments so that I can spend the additional time and money on the business?

If you feel you're psychologically suited to direct marketing, take stock of your strengths and weaknesses in the business:

- Do you have the equipment and a boat big enough to properly handle the product?
- Do you have, or have access to, ice or chilling machinery?
- Is there regular, reliable, affordable transportation from your point of landing to the location of your potential customers?
- Is the timing and volume of your catch conducive to taking the time out to handle and transport fish and to meeting the volume and delivery frequency demands of your customers?
- Is the species mix and intrinsic quality of your catch appropriate to the market? (see *intrinsic* vs. *extrinsic* quality explanation in this manual)
- Do you have a plan for the roe (if your product is salmon) and for fish that your customers don't want because of species, size, condition or other factors?
- Do you have customers already lined up, or do you have a plan for selling your product?
- Do you have available cash for up-front operating expenses and to cover cash flow in case some customers don't pay or if, for some other reason, the operation is not immediately profitable?