

TOP 10

No Cost or Low Cost Marketing Tools for Your Horse Business

There are any number of highly successful horse breeders and trainers, like you, who are to be congratulated for having developed a successful business to date. You chose your breed or discipline and built your business to satisfy the needs of your customers (your target market).

You've earned the right to proudly wear your Stetson or ASTM helmet. Like most of us, you may wear any number of hats: spouse, parent, breadwinner, community volunteer, church member, competitor, board member, friend, teacher or student. Little wonder that you have, as yet, not had the time, opportunity, or resources, to master the art of marketing your horse business in a tough economic climate.

For those of you looking to don your marketing person's hat, Linda Hazelwood (editor) and I respectfully dedicate this new series of marketing tools to give you a leg up on this, perhaps underdeveloped, aspect of your business. In today's highly challenging horse industry, improving your marketing strategies by taking advantage of free or cost effective marketing techniques may make the difference between barely surviving and thriving.

It's our goal to help you with your time and resources crunch by offering you a series of marketing articles. Starting with this issue, we will provide basic information at the rate of one marketing tool per issue. Each concept is offered in sequence so you can construct your marketing plan from the ground up. Should some of these suggestions stir your interest and you want to go into more detail, you are invited to read more on my Marketing Tips blog (www.horsescoops.com/blog/) and on Horse Country's website (www.horsecountry.ca).

Marnie Somers

Marketing:
The right product, in the
right place, at the right time,
at the right price.

- Adcock.

Marketing Tool #1 The Bare Bones.

Marketing is more than just advertising. It's really the whole environment surrounding your horse business. While that may sound intimidating, don't worry, you are already employing marketing strategies on a daily basis. You just may not recognize it as such. Let's say you are in town picking up feed from a local merchant, who politely asks you how things are going? You reply "Great, we're really excited about our new foal crop". A customer in line behind you asks, "What kind of horses do you raise?" And the conversation takes off. Well, you're not just having a conversation, you're marketing. Good for you!

The Absolute "Must-have" Marketing Tool:

But do you have a business card to give this customer or to leave behind at the feed store? Does your business card accurately describe your operation? Does it include your contact information, and list your email address and website? Serious business people have business cards and they make the effort to distribute them as often as possible. Should we, as serious horse-business people, do any less?

If you don't already have business cards, please, start here. Commercially printed business cards are not all that expensive. You could even print them yourself on your computer very economically, but be sure to choose good quality card stock and to use a classy design because you only get one chance to make a good first impression. If you think you don't need business cards, then how would that

DESIGN TIPS

- **Simpler is better.**
- **If cost is an issue, keep to one or two colours.**
- **Produce a signature style and keep the same colours, fonts and style throughout all your printed material and website design.**
- **Recognition and remembering is the aim.**
- **Consider having a professional develop a style for you.**

customer from the feed store remember who she spoke to? How would she contact you or look up your website?

What Other Tools Do You Need?

Having your business card in hand jump starts the marketing cycle. That customer from the feed store notices your website address on your business card and looks up your horse operation. Your website offers her an on-line sign up form so she can receive regular email updates or a monthly newsletter. The email or newsletter sign-up

gives you the opportunity to be in touch with her on a scheduled basis. This increases your chances to sell her your product or service. (Okay, so you don't have a website yet, never mind a monthly newsletter. We'll deal with that in later articles.) While each of these marketing tools can stand alone, they work so much harder for you when they support and complement each other.

Identify, anticipate and satisfy customer requirements profitably.

-Chartered Institute of Marketing.

If you have other printed materials such as business stationery, letterhead, envelopes, brochures, or you place advertisements in horse magazines, sale catalogues or industry directories, make sure they contain all your contact information including your telephone number, email and website addresses. You'd be surprised how often we notice one or more of these critical identifiers are missing!

To hopefully whet your appetite for what's to come, here are our Top Ten Marketing Tools:

- 1** Start with the Bare Bones of Marketing (covered in this issue)
- 2** Identify Your Customers (Target Market) and Use Sale Contracts
- 3** Write and submit News Releases
- 4** Showcase Your Product or Services to Your Market
- 5** Market through Email, Facebook, Twitter and other Social Networking sites
- 6** Net Etiquette Concerning Photo and Email Permissions
- 7** Measure the Effectiveness of Your Web site
- 8** Build Business Networks and Position Your Business Within the Industry
- 9** Build Credibility to Generate Customer Referrals
- 10** Deliver Great After-Sales Service to Maintain Customer Relationships

In the spirit of mutual learning and sharing, we invite your questions, comments and feedback (positive and negative), which you can post on our websites or submit direct to editor@horsecountry.ca.

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