

Instalment #1 described categorizing potential customers, known as “niche marketing” – matching your products or services with the most likely buyers. The next step is ensuring these most likely buyers either are, or become aware that your horse business can meet their needs and wants.

Two marketing strategies that will help you are:

Differentiation

Figuring out how your horse business is unique so that when prospects are ready to buy, they immediately think of your business, not a competitor’s. A savvy marketer jumps out ahead of the herd – to create “top of the mind marketing”. In its most simple form differentiation is like word association – for example, what comes to mind when someone mentions “cola”, to you? Your next thought will probably be “Coke”. Do you have a marketing edge over your competitors, such as the AQHA or other breed Incentive Funds? Perhaps you stand the only stallion with his particular bloodlines in Canada? Make the most of these differences to stand out.

Positioning

Identifying how your business is at the very top of your “niche” in the market. People like to buy from the best – it gives them bragging rights to impress their friends with. For example, “Well, I bought my new horse from Canada’s best (or newest, or largest, or oldest, or most successful) hunter-jumper breeder.” Create a tagline (a business slogan) which identifies your business as the top “whatever”. One client taglined his breeding operation as having “Canada’s largest concentration of Driftwood working cow horse bloodlines”. You may be able to claim that you top your market niche with a supply of in-demand colours such as Palominos, Roans or Grullas. Or, you’re the home of Ontario’s fastest Standardbred pacer.

Don’t be shy about letting your clients know your claim to fame. If you and another competitor can both equally make the same claim, then make the claim first – before your competitor does. It’s pretty hard to knock you off your pedestal, if you get there first.

No Magic Tricks

Unfortunately with marketing, there is no one magic trick to build your business. It’s built through the cumulative efforts of your whole stable of marketing strategies. Some of these methods will be familiar to you,

TOP 10

No Cost or Low Cost Marketing Tools for Your Horse Business

Instalment 4

In this instalment of Top Ten marketing tools, Linda and I recommend why and how to showcase and market your products/services to help you promote your horse business to your target market.

Previous instalments of this series are at www.horsecountry.ca/archives.htm

such as the traditional ones:

- Acquire business cards, letterhead, brochures, and printed materials.
- Advertise in horse industry magazines and directories, and agricultural newspapers.
- Put up arena banners, stall decorations and signs at horse events.
- Advertise in sales catalogues in which you have consigned animals for sale.
- Issue media (press) releases to the public and your clients (see Instalment #3).
- Create and maintain your own business website.

Other contemporary methods to showcase your product/services include:

- Create outgoing email marketing messages – www.constantcontact.com/email-marketing/index.jsp.
- Buy and/or sell Google ad space - www.google.com/adsense.
- Create a Facebook page for your business - www.netrostar.com/Article-216-A%20road%20map%20for%20setting%20up%20Facebook%20page%20for%20business. (Look on www.horsecountry.ca, home page, we’ll give you a link to click on!)

- Use other Social media networks:
Twitter – www.chrisbrogan.com/50-ideas-on-using-twitter-for-business.
LinkedIn – www.linkedin.com/static?key=business_info.
- Create a “blog” (a web-log) which is a personal or business journal with entries posted more frequently than you would make to your website (for an example see Horse Country Magazine’s new blog – horsecountrymagazine.blogspot.com).
- Offer to write for magazines or newspapers as an expert on your industry. Magazines often exchange well-written, well-sourced articles for advertising.

While each of these marketing tools can, and do stand alone, they work so much harder for you when they support and complement each other. Be sure that any creative designs you use are consistent with your business’ brand. The last thing you want to do is have several different looks or styles to your advertising materials, because then you can’t capitalize on the benefits of repeating the visual image of your brand to your target market.

It is usually worth paying a professional to make a half page and a quarter page advert for you to have available to send out to magazines, rather than have them make a new one each time. The magazine designer will respect your professionalism!

One other essential point: make sure every marketing method includes all your critical contact information including your phone number, email and web address.

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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