

TOP 10

No Cost or Low Cost Marketing Tools for Your Horse Business

by Marnie Somers.

Instalment 6

In this installment of Top Ten marketing tools, Linda and I discuss the need to comply with proper Internet etiquette, known as “Netiquette”. This term refers to the expectation that Internet users will follow generally accepted conventions, or social behaviours, when using the Internet. This article will describe “Netiquette” expectations when creating and distributing marketing email messages (Email permissions); and the right to use photographic images (Copyright permission).

All the links quoted in this article and previous instalments of this series are at www.horsecountry.ca/archives.htm

Let’s start with Email Do’s and Don’ts!

- Do add a compelling “Subject line” which can be searched and found easily. Don’t miss out on this prime piece of email real estate. An interesting “Subject line” hooks people into reading the content of your email – that’s the whole point. (And if you don’t use a subject line, quite often your email is booted straight into the spam box.)
- Do re-read and spell check your outgoing email – your professionalism is at stake. Set your email program to auto-correct errors as you type, and do a final spell check before you hit the “send” button.
- Do remember to provide your contact information – all of it. Include links to your website, blog, Facebook page, etc. You can automate this in your email program under “insert signature”, and then you just have one click to insert all your contact info into each email you send out. It’s the courteous thing to do, so people can reach you.
- Don’t send “spam” (unsolicited commercial email). Only send email to those with whom you have an established relationship (see “Email Permissions” paragraph below). Spam has grown exponentially over the years and today amounts to approximately 80–85% of all the email in the world. It is arguably

one of the “dark sides” of the Internet.

- DON’T USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS in the body of your email – it is considered the equivalent of “shouting” at someone! IT’S NOT POLITE TO SHOUT!
 - Don’t reveal other recipients’ email addresses in the “TO” or “CC” boxes. If you are sending out a bulk email message to 100 recipients you are revealing what should be 100 confidential email addresses. Instead put your own name (or a generic name such as “Recipient List” and use your own email address) in the “TO” box. You can then put your 100 email address list in the “BCC” box – and no other recipients’ email addresses will show up in the delivered email copy.
 - Don’t automatically hit the “reply all” button if you only need to “reply” to the original sender – everyone is overloaded with unwanted and unnecessary email. Don’t add to the problem.
 - Don’t use a former email on “Subject A” to send a new email on “Subject B”. It makes it difficult for the receiver to file and retrieve. Start with a fresh email or, if you must use a previous email, at least be sure you change the subject line to your new topic.
 - If you are having an ongoing “conversation” on a topic always reply to the previous email to keep the thread, don’t start a new email each time.
 - Don’t abuse the options of flagging your email as “important” or requesting a “delivered” or “read” receipt. If you always use these options (it’s the equivalent of “crying wolf”) and no one will pay attention to any of your emails.
- Finally: Do install and keep updating a commercially recognised virus protector in the interests of both your own business and your customers.

Email Permissions:

So, when is a legitimate email marketing message not considered “Spam”? When the sending party has implicit or actual permission from the addressee to make contact. Typically this means having an established business connection with the addressee, such as someone who:

- Has purchased a product or service from your business, i.e. a current or previous customer.
- Has signed up to receive a periodic newsletter, or special offers from your business.
- “Likes” or “follows” your business Facebook page, or blog
- Initiated contact with your business by email, phone, written correspondence, or submitted comments or an enquiry on your website’s guest book or “Contact Us” form.
- Provided you with their business card.

Let’s say your “Email permissions” list becomes is too cumbersome to handle – you have so many contacts and/or you have so many email marketing messages to send out (woo hoo!). You can move up to using email campaign management software such as Constant Contact or Mail Chimp (some fees will apply) to automate the process and save you loads of time. Such software also provides statistics on delivered/ opened mail which can be useful. However, when you start using these programs you will be

required to sign off that all your contacts are "Permission-based". So you might as well keep your contact list(s) "clean" right from the start and not be considered a "Spammer".

When sending mass marketing emails, the recipient must always have a place to "unsubscribe" or "opt-out" of receiving your communication and you must respect their choice.


Photographic Copyright Permissions:

Most of us are aware that it is not "kosher" to download proprietary software, music or other original content, without paying for it. Copying other's artistic works for personal gain is prohibited by Canadian law. Copyright infringement seems to get fuzzy for some folks when it comes to purchasing photographic images. Just because you bought a photograph image from a professional photographer at a show or event, doesn't necessarily give you the "all uses" rights to that photograph. You must ensure you have the photographer's permission to use that image (digital or printed) for ads in publications, or placing on your website, or sending out with a media release. Some photographers build "all uses" rights into the original price of the images you purchase. Others may charge an additional fee. Contact the photographer to find out, and request written permission to reuse the photo(s). Get all your ducks in a row and have that documentation readily available.

When submitting photographic images to a magazine editor, to your webmaster, or accompanying a media release, be sure to include the photographer's name (for photo credit) and the

information describing the image – a "cutline" or caption for the photo. (Go to www.horsecountry.ca/idea.html for suggestions for cutlines, and other information which relate to submitting copy.)

Netiquette is not only a nicety; it's a measure of your everyday business practices. It's one more indication that you are a reputable person running a respectable operation. In the marketing industry we like to say "perception is reality". What it means is that your customers' perceptions of you are their reality, and will cause them to want to do business with you, or not! Guard your business image carefully.

As previously mentioned in every previous installment, there is no one magic trick to build your business. It's built through the cumulative efforts of your whole stable of marketing tools and strategies. And, they work so much harder for you when they support and complement each other. 

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