

New Era For Marketing



Online technology — from Facebook to Twitter — can lend a helping hand to complement print advertising efforts and move your business forward.

by *Kindra Gordon*, field editor

How many times in a day do you hear people mention something “neat” that they saw on the Internet or Facebook? Wouldn’t it be great if the comments they were buzzing about related to your business, products or services?

With today’s technology — and some savvy marketing skills — it is possible to integrate these new tools with your print-marketing efforts to create some extra buzz for your business. Examples of digital tools include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and QR (quick response) codes.

Internet marketing specialist Susan Sweeney points out that 15 years ago — before the Internet was commonplace — marketing was difficult and expensive. Today, though, technology is available, fairly easy to use and inexpensive. For instance, a Facebook account is free and most do-it-yourself websites only require a nominal monthly hosting fee of less than \$20.

In today’s online world, online marketing is a great supplement to your print advertising, says Sweeney. Think of it like adding mashed potatoes and gravy to a hearty pot roast dinner.

Sweeney notes that having a presence for your business online is becoming even more crucial given the popularity and power of social media. She points out that consumers used to make purchases after doing some research and then visiting with friends. Today, they turn to social media sites like Facebook, online videos or photo postings for more information and feedback and then often make their purchasing decisions. This practice is becoming as commonplace for buying kitchen appliances and clothing as it is for livestock feedstuffs, show equipment and even cattle.

Sweeney notes that the other bonus from social media buzz is that it can drive traffic to your website and essentially to your business. For instance, Sweeney points out that if you have a great product and a great website, but no one knows about it, then it will be very difficult to make sales and be successful.

That’s where Facebook or Twitter, a blog, YouTube videos or Pinterest come in. By posting short comments and photos, you create interest that keeps you connected with people and drives traffic for more information to your website and/or your business.

Sweeney says, “The longer they stay on your web presence, the more people connect with you, and you’ll be top of mind when they go to buy.”

Do’s & don’ts

Sweeney, who has authored several Internet-marketing books, including *101*

Ways to Promote Your Website, does caution that there are some tips and tricks for putting the Internet to work for your business.

1. Pay attention to details. Sweeney emphasizes that keeping your online reputation current is critical. She uses the analogy of first impressions, saying, “You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression.” Sweeney says the same is true online.

“If you don’t pay attention to details on your website (or other online venues), people will begin to think you don’t pay attention to the details of your business,” she says. “So it’s really important to have a nice-looking website and to keep your online postings current.”

As an example for seedstock producers, make certain your sale book and listing is current, and after the sale, post a sale report.

2. Optimize search engines. Sweeney notes that having your business come up in online search engines is essential for building traffic to your Facebook page or website. One tip to do this is by listing your business (or ranch) location on Google Maps. “This will help you come up higher on the list in online searches,” she says.

3. Use the “share” button. On Facebook, Sweeney says it’s important to include the “share” plug-in button on your page. This makes it easier for friends or fans who view your page to like or share something and post it to their page so an even broader audience sees it.

4. Use “calls to action.” “It’s amazing what people do when they are told to do it,” says Sweeney. For instance, she says by using phrases like “Join our mailing list” or “Share this post with three friends,” people often will do what they are told. Another tactic is to ask people to post a comment or share a photo on your site, which creates more traffic buzz.

5. Separate business and personal. A firm rule Sweeney advises for Facebook users is to keep your personal Facebook page separate from a business-oriented one. She notes that people who are interested in your business may not be interested in what you are doing for the weekend.

6. Think mobile. Mobile is becoming more popular than desktop computers for viewing online information, reports Sweeney. To this point, she says it is becoming essential that future websites must be mobile-friendly, meaning they can be fully viewed on a mobile device such as a phone or tablet computer.

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To aid your online marketing efforts, she suggests using the QR code, which stands for quick response. You’ve likely seen this little black-and-white digitized box on advertisements or sale books. Using a smartphone, the code can be scanned and will take the individual directly to a website or online page for more information. A graphic designer can create these.

What’s coming

In forecasting the future, Sweeney says the writing is on the wall: The Internet and mobile technology are here to stay, and people are using them frequently to do business.

Sweeney says the next big thing coming online is “Near Field Communication,” which will allow for mobile commerce. As an example, she says instead of having a credit card, you will just swipe your phone across a scanner and the phone is the credit card. Similarly, at hotels, instead of a room key, you will use your phone to open the hotel room door.

That said, it’s a new era for marketing. While face-to-face and print marketing are still essential, Sweeney is adamant that those businesses that will thrive for the future will also find ways to adapt and utilize Internet technology alongside the traditional tools.



Editor’s Note: Kindra Gordon is an Angus Journal field editor and cattlewoman near Whitewood, S.D.

Ample online options

If you have yet to dive into the variety of online tools available for marketing your business today, here’s a quick review of some of the options available.

Websites tend to be a starting point for creating an online presence. Usually a homepage, with three to four supplemental pages of information make a nice website. Your homepage may list a little about the operation and a lead photo of the ranch or business. Supplemental pages may list ranch/business history, photos and details on bulls and cows, and sale information.

You can hire a designer to create and update your website (usually for a fee from a few hundred dollars and up). The *Angus Journal* Web Services team can help you plan, compile and build a website tailored to your individual needs. The cost will vary, depending on how elaborate and how original you want your site to be.

If you prefer to do it yourself, many online sites now offer build-it-yourself websites. One of the most popular is *Weebly.com*, which offers about 150 templates to choose from. You add photos and text.

If you’d like to add social media to your marketing efforts, options would include Facebook, Twitter or a blog. Each offers you the ability to go online and post comments, photos or video clips and then share that information with your followers. A blog typically allows for more text and story telling, Twitter is more like texting with short comments. Facebook falls somewhere in between. You should choose the format that best fits your purpose.

Another means of sharing information is through YouTube videos. These short 2- to 4-minute videos can then be posted to your website (or your social media pages) and shared with your followers. You might create a video clip of cattle in the pasture, a tour of the ranch or business, a specific feature sire, etc.

Typically you would include a link to these accounts on your website so that people can find your social media efforts.

Guidelines to keep in mind with social media are to keep your posts business-related and professional. You also want to build a following, so you will want to post with some frequency to keep people interested. Most individuals aim to do a post once or twice a week. As a bull sale or event approaches, perhaps you’ll find it appropriate to post daily.

Facebook can be an especially useful tool for posting multiple cattle photos or YouTube video clips to promote as a sale event approaches. There’s also the ability to feature more photos of sale animals than space was allowed in the sale book.

Facebook can be a great tool for communicating with customers after the sale, as well. You can post who bought a specific animal and they have the opportunity to post comments and photos about how that animal is doing in their herd (or in the showing).

Similarly, Pinterest is an up-and-coming web platform that allows people to share information primarily through photos. It’s meant to be a virtual bulletin board. Many folks use it to share recipes and craft ideas. In the business realm it can also be used to share photos of products or special events, such as a ranch roundup, to give consumers a glimpse of ranch life and serve as an educational tool.