

INTERNET MARKETING FOR YOUR AGRITOURISM BUSINESS



If you are not comfortable using the Internet to market your business, find a friend or family member who is. You need to play where your guests play and, for the most part, this is the place!

Tools for Internet Marketing (definitions):

Website:

This is yours; you create it, and as such have control over its content, look, and feel. You have (some) control where it shows up on the Internet, but not all.

- Referred to as your domain name or URL (ex. www.myfarm.com)
- The actual product can be a website, a blog, a Facebook page
- This is where you tell the world who you are and what you offer
- Websites used to be one-way communication (broadcast) – more and more it's about your story and your community
- Ages 40 (50?)-and-under use the Internet instead of the phone book. You are lost to them if you aren't on it in some fashion.

Social Media:

Think of this as the place where we share stuff with our friends, acquaintances, and customers on the web

- Most common: Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, Blogger/WordPress, Digg, Share This, Google+
- We share with our friends and we share with our fans, too
- We can ask questions, play games, create a community that can easily interact with us on a daily basis
- This is a good place to listen to the hot topics of the day, also what people are saying about you
- Think of this as peer-to-peer recommendations which we all love – not sales or ads which we don't
- Sharing is much easier than even 5 years ago, and much faster (this has its pros and cons for a business) – reason to be a player... so you have a voice



What do people do online (& why should you be there too)?

They/you **Discover**

- Estimated that 300 million people use Google a day. Doesn't count other search engines like Yahoo and Bing (Ask.com)
- Use search engines as: dictionary, telephone book, encyclopedia, solutions, recipes, contact, research, news, translator, library, map/directions, and on and on

They/you **Share**

- 64% of US Internet users use social media (emarketer.com); 72% under 30 (pewinternet.org)
- Share opinions, photos, videos, stories, news, humor, music, just about anything and everything that one friend might think is interesting for his or her other friends or family

They/you **Learn**

- Just 'Google' it. The references you see in this handout (e.g. emarketer.com) are the result of a Google search to find out the answers for questions like "How many people (do) use Google daily?"
- We can learn anything –about your agritourism venture or in your case about how others do it (best practices, pricing, location, name, hours, offering, facilities, etc.)

They/you **Buy**

- 7 out of 10 Internet users buy online. In 2011 148 million consumers older than 14 purchased something (emarketer.com)
- Apply this to what you sell. Maybe not your veggies, but how about products like soap, a ticket to a farm day, or a booking for a farm stay?

What Makes a Good Website?

- 1) Simple URL
- 2) Easy navigation- how to get from A to B
- 3) Good photographs
- 4) Limited copy
- 5) Easy to read
- 6) If selling, easy to buy
- 7) Clean layout
- 8) Contact information easy to find
- 9) Clear, simple descriptions
- 10) Tells a story about the people behind the business
- 11) Good reflection of your 'brand'

Ages 40 (50?)-and-under use the Internet instead of the phone book. You are lost to them if you aren't on it in some fashion.

Where and How to Start

Define your objectives. Do you just want people to know where you are located? Do you want to tell your story? Engage your customer? Create video/photo archives? Something else? All of the above?

WEBSITE (if you don't do anything else, let the world know you exist)

Design

- Unless you have some experience already, it's worth hiring someone to get the basic template laid out (you'll save money in the end, promise)
- Website should be Open Source CMS (Content Management System), which means you don't pay for the program and once the template is set up you can make your own changes whenever you want
- Blogger and Wordpress are two of the most popular CMS website tools, with many add-ons. Lots of other CMS programs out there.

Cost

- Blogger and Wordpress are free:
<http://www.blogger.com> (Google product)
<http://www.wordpress.org>
(free but un-hosted)
<http://www.wordpress.com>
(inexpensive hosting by Blue Host)
- Hosting fee: free to \$25/month. Average \$6/month
- Domain registration (URL): average \$10/year
- Customized website design and functionality: \$500 - \$3,000; high-level customization \$10,000+

Tracking

- Google Analytics – free. Tracks traffic, best content, sources, mapping, goals, etc.
<http://www.google.com/analytics>
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – free check on key words, positioning in searches, etc.
http://www.seotoolset.com/tools/free_tools.html

Content

- Gives you the opportunity to highlight your farm and what you have to offer.
- Simple: one page with contact information, brief summary, descriptive photo
- Usual: basic information, contact, history, rates, events, photos, testimonials
- You need to write the copy, also select the photos yourself; your designer can't do this for you
- Keep you copy short and sweet. People don't take time to read. Spellcheck!

Resources

- Farm templates/monthly fee:
<http://www.smallfarmcentral.com/>
- Find websites you like and ask who created them and how much
- Be wary of template sites using stock art and overseas technicians – you may be limited in what you can do and change. Low cost isn't always worth it
- Your web designer doesn't need to be local. Afterall, it's the Internet. But it can be convenient



SOCIAL MEDIA (You don't need to participate in all of these. Pick what works for you. Start slowly.)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>

Currently the largest social network with over 800 million active users, 50% log on daily (Facebook: press/info.php?statistics). Used to connect with your fans for a two way conversation; also to show them what you are doing or are interested in. Great place to ask questions and get feedback.

Things to know or check:

- Must create personal account first
- Must create Fan Page for business – do not use personal page (look at bottom of your personal page for the link) <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>
- Check privacy settings (you should do this regularly)
- Check email notification settings
- Select a unique user name (can't change without losing all your friends/fans!) <http://apps.facebook.com/username>
- Mobile phone features
- Applications
 - Twitter connect: <http://apps.facebook.com/twitter>
 - Blog connect: <http://apps.facebook.com/rss-connect>
- Facebook likes to change its format on a regular basis. Know that we all struggle and get irritated with this practice!

Etiquette:

- Don't spam your friend and fans with email or game requests
- Use your real information and profile photo
- Share interesting links, photos, events, videos
- Remember, what you post isn't private if your friends share it
- If you don't post somewhat regularly, your fans will stop following
- There can be more than one administrator if you don't have time or interest in keeping up with this



SOCIAL MEDIA, cont.

Blogs:

This is where you can share your passion and expertise outside of your website. You can even set up your blog to allow comments.

Blogger and Wordpress are mentioned above with their URLs.

Things to know:

- These can look different from your main website, should have different URL
- Usually take on the personality of the person writing – this is a good thing
- Prove your expertise
- Share knowledge
- Create your story

Etiquette:

- Answer comments when necessary
- Track comments for spam and remove it immediately (or check into spam catchers, like Akismet)
- Don't make the posts too long – attention spans are short
- Use photos to break up text or demonstrate your point visually
- Try for distinct URL and not one tied to something that doesn't make sense



Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com>

Becoming more common in use and covers any and all subjects! Quick way to share information.

Things to know or check:

- Only allows 140 characters per message
- Create a recognizable username related to your name or business
- Fill in your bio, add photo, do not 'protect your updates'
- Use keywords in search, track your industry
- Search on your name regularly. Is anyone talking about you?
- What can you add to the conversation?
- You may find leads on stories that take you to other connections of value
- If you have to make a choice of social media based on time, this has the shortest staying power
- Engineers use Twitter as community to solve problems; could farmers?
- Follow people who interest you
- Filter with lists
- Set aside short amounts of time for Tweeting
- Use tools to manage Twitter:
 - <http://tweetdeck.com> – desktop mgmt
 - <http://hootsuite.com> – web based mgmt
 - <http://cotweet.com> – web based mgmt
 - <http://twitpic.com> – share photos
 - <http://bit.ly> – create short link URLs
 - <http://twitterfeed.com> – connect your blog
- Symbols
 - @ : messages starting with these are replies
 - RT: re-tweet or forwarding a message on
 - # : hashtag ties messages together under a subject (i.e., #agchat)

SOCIAL MEDIA, cont.

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com>

Photo sharing site. Easy upload. Personal.

Things to know:

- Easy to upload your photos – various sizes
- Can search for other people's photos and make comments
- Can create groups for your photos
<http://www.flickr.com/groups>
- Ask your guests/customers to join your group
- Request photographers already on Flickr to become part of your group
- Some photos are free to use (without copyright)

Google Reader:

<http://www.google.com/reader>

This is really a listening tool for you. You can set it to pick up anything of interest on the Internet. Excellent for tracking what's being said about your business.

Things to know:

- Set up to track News, Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr
- Different than Google Alerts which can be set up similarly but sends notices to your email
- Keeps all information in one place
- Can be overwhelming if you track too much
- Great for staying on top of articles published in your area, people talking about your business or similar ones
- Makes for good connections

Acknowledgment: *Some of the bullet points above had been pulled from free trainings offered by ProWorks Corp, Corvallis OR. They are a full service web design-development-strategy firm that has helped bring Farm Stay U.S. to life on the web. For more social media tips go to their blog: <http://www.proworks.com/blog>. Email: contact@proworks.com. 541-752-9885. Twitter: @proworks.*

YouTube (also Vimeo): www.youtube.com

*Has just outpaced Google in daily users!
Videos- the power of movies to entertain*

Things to know:

- Videos appear to go viral fast because they are easy to attach
- You can make your own YouTube Channel to keep all your videos together
- Can be used for business or personal

