

AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN OUTLINE

The phases of developing a digital marketing plan for your farm:

1. **Design** – What is our purpose?
2. **Get Discovered**– How are people going to find out about our online presence?
3. **Relationship Building** – How are we going to get people to engage with our content?
4. **Commerce** – How do we make sales and increase them?
5. **Community Growth** – How do we build community loyalty and advocacy?

These phases are meant to initially be followed chronologically, but each phase/section can be revisited for modifications.

Design

Purpose Statement

Creating a purpose statement is a great way to start the planning process. This can be an internal or external statement. Similar to mission and vision statements, a purpose statement is meant to describe the following:

1. What do you want your online business to be?
2. What do you want your online business to do?
3. What do you want your online business to have as a result of what it does?

Once you have answered those three questions, try to combine them into one 2-3 sentence statement.



Messaging

In this part you want to define the way that you will present yourself to the digital audience. In this section, you want to:

1. Define your brand and the products you sell.
2. Define who your target audience(s) will be and how you will present your brand and products to that audience. Many companies have several different audiences. It's important to recognize the unique aspects of each audience and make sure that your presentation to those audiences address their needs. A good place to start is profiling your current customer base. What motivates them to buy from you?

Here is some information to help guide your messaging:

Preparation Points of Focus

- Focus on the benefits of your product/service features. Potential clients/targets don't care how great your product or service is (features). They care about what they will get personally for buying your product/service (benefit).
- Explain why you are the best source for this product/service.
- Provide proof that the product does what we say it will with testimonials, awards, special recognition, articles, case studies, white papers.

Creating Messaging

- Always consider the audience you are targeting and make sure they understand "what's in it for them". Build on your "Benefits" that you've defined.
- Speak the target's language.
- Create a sense of urgency.
- Make a statement to your target audience. Help the target audience visualize the benefits of our product. Graphics, videos, etc.
- Accentuate your unique value proposition.
- Establish credibility.

- Create a **conversation** not a presentation. Engage the target audience.
- **Always include a call to action on every piece of content. A call to action (CTA) is a message that is meant to influence a decision by your target audience.**

Get Discovered

The result of this phase is to define how people are going to find out about your online presence (website, social media, etc.). You have your purpose, you have your messaging, now what are you going to do in order to get noticed?

Website

Making a choice for a website is extremely important. Some questions to answer are:

1. What's the main reason for having the website? Do I want to simply post information about our business? Do I want it to create leads/potential customers? Do I want current and prospective customers to contact me? Do I want to have an online store/eCommerce component?
2. What's my budget for the website? Do I understand all monthly and yearly costs?
3. Who's going to build and manage the website?
4. Does my website service/platform have excellent customer service?
5. Will I be able to manage inventory if I'm using an eCommerce component? Is it automated?
6. Who do I go to if something goes wrong with my website?
7. Do I need a CSA component for my website? If so, do I understand the costs?
8. How much time is this going to take me to setup and then maintain it?

**These questions may be most appropriate while you meet with your consultant, website service provider, web developer, or website manager.*

Marketing Activities

Farmers have the unique opportunity to influence traffic to their website with online marketing activities that are coordinated with offline activities.

Online

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** – *This is a complicated topic that may require the assistance of someone with experience.* The goal is to make it easier for people to find your services if they happen to be searching online for your business or a service that your business offers. Here are a few general points to consider:



- Make sure that your website is being indexed by the major search engines. Google is the best place to start. Every website platform/builder has different integrations with search engines. When you are beginning the development of your website, make sure that whoever is supporting you can confirm how your website will be indexed by the major search engines.
- Another thing to consider is to make sure that the content on your site is original, informative, engaging, and non-derogatory.
- If you are going to include links on your site to other websites, make sure that they are valid and reputable.
- Make sure that you are updating and adding content to your website. Don't just leave it alone.
- **Social Media** - Remember that consistency is important with all messaging. Much of social media can be used to reach new and old audiences. If used correctly, the farm can bridge the gap between the business and its prospective clients. People want to know where their food comes from, this is a great mechanism to keep them informed. A main rule is to make sure that all of your communications have a clear purpose and call to action.
 - Facebook
 - A tool that can be used for announcements, blog posts, farm stories, etc.
 - The messaging feature is excellent as a customer service portal.
 - You can network with other farms, communities, service providers, and agriculture industry entities.
 - Provides the opportunity to advertise. For beginners, advertising on Facebook and Instagram is considered to be easier than advertising through Google's networks.
 - Instagram
 - Visually engage your audience with pictures and videos from the farm.
 - Make sure that every post is a visually-engaging photo or video that is a representation of the work that the farm does. A major focus should be about the farm story (history) and the stories behind your efforts.
 - Provides opportunity to advertise.
 - Consider using hashtags to integrate with trends.
 - Other social media platforms to consider:
 - LinkedIn: the "professional" aspect of your social media presence. Utilized to engage with other professional organizations.
 - Twitter: engage younger crowd as well as professionals within the agriculture field. This platform could specialize in directly communicating with potential and current clients, particularly to announce sales, new events. The biggest role that this platform could play is interacting with local, regional, and national

government and service provider agencies which are highly prominent on this platform.

- Pinterest: a high presence of the craft maker and especially the Do-it-Yourself crowd. Preliminary research has shown that there are plenty of topics on gardening and farming. This could be a unique channel to deliver messaging to hobby gardeners or new farmers. People go to Pinterest for ideas and to try new things. Farms could utilize this platform to engage audiences with tips on farm topics. It is an interesting platform because there will be more engagement by the audience since they are purposefully looking for something.
- Consider paid advertising, but understand that you will more than likely have a lower return on investment at the beginning as you learn to use the tools. Facebook offers excellent tutorials to get started.
- **Tools for managing your social media accounts:**
 - We recommend keeping everything simple in the beginning to make sure that the admin(s) are able to get familiar with the new platforms. Special attention to all details is mandatory as one minute error can lead to a mountain of trouble. Once something is published online, it's pretty much there for good, even with the ability to delete content; audiences can't "unsee" something.
 - Hootsuite is one of the most popular tools to manage all of your social media accounts. Buffer is too.

Offline

There are many ways to engage with your offline audience to increase traffic to your digital outlets.

- All printed materials must have your email address, website domain, and the web addresses and names of your social media accounts.
- Print materials are an excellent way to announce sales (discounts) on your website.
- Build your list for email marketing (explained later) at farmers markets and other in-person gatherings.

Customer Journey Path

It's important to take a look at your current customer base and visually create a map of how they originally became your customer. How did they find you? What made them purchase from you? How long have they been a customer? What is the lifetime value of this customer to your business?



Throughout this process, you will discover ways to add more value to the marketing efforts that you undertake in order to find more customers and increase the value of current customers.

Relationship Building

In order to figure out how people are going to engage with your content, it's important to consider the basic forms of traffic that come to your website.

Direct Traffic

This form of traffic comes from when somebody is already familiar with your website and they type your website address (myfarm.com) into the search bar. This form of traffic is a reflection of how well you are promoting your website online and offline and how well you are retaining online customers.

Key to success: Make sure that you are clearly sharing your website address on printed materials and encourage people to “bookmark” your website.

Organic Traffic

This form of traffic is the major indicator of how well your website is performing. It is a great way to measure how well you are maintaining your site as well as how well you are utilizing appropriate messaging on your site. Your Organic traffic takes a while to initially build, but should constantly increase over time. If your Organic traffic is going down, you should have someone consult you or troubleshoot on your own for why this is happening.

Key to Success: Make sure that you are adhering to all Search Engine Optimization guidelines and that you are creating content that engages site visitors.

Referral Traffic

This is traffic that comes to your site from another website. This is great traffic to have as it means that other websites find it valuable to have a link on their website to your website.

Key to Success: Find websites that are aligned with your website/company/industry and ask permission to link to their site and/or have them link to your website should you find it to be mutually beneficial.



Social Media

As detailed earlier, this is the traffic that comes to your site from social media. This could be traffic generated from your social media entities, or it could be from others. In any case, it is a good measurement on how well your social media activities are performing for your business.

Key to Success: Stay consistent with your social media messaging and make sure that you are including calls to action in that messaging that directs people to your website.

Email Marketing

This is one of the most effective ways to build relationships with your clients and to increase sales. Email marketing has the highest conversion rate of all traffic channels because the people on your list have already told you that they want to hear from you. Influencing a sale is easier in that channel.

Key to Success: Get an email service like MailChimp or Constant Contact and maintain up-to-date email lists. Make sure that you are frequently engaging these lists of contacts with valuable messaging and constantly aim to build your lists.

Commerce

How to influence sales and increase sales volumes. The most important part of this phase is to analyze the information that your website is producing for you. The main points of interest, or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be:

- Sales
- Revenue
- Average Order Value

You want to see these categories increase over time. If they do not, it may be time to evaluate your prices and your promotions. This is also the time to check on your competition to make sure your efforts are competitive.

Analytics

Once you get a handle on your online activities, we highly encourage you to implement Google Analytics. This is a free service that allows you to dig deeper into the performance of your website and your marketing efforts. It also helps you get an understanding of your audience profiles. The more you utilize Google Analytics, the more efficient you will become with your online activities. Google has provided many online learning materials that instruct you how to get started and how to process

information from Google Analytics. A major way to utilize Google Analytics is to find out the levels of sales and online activities that come from the major traffic channels (Direct, Referral, Social Media, Email, and Organic) and compare those numbers to your marketing efforts.

Community Growth

Your businesses overall goals are to create new sales and repeat purchases. The main indicators of success in this phase are:

- Repeat purchases
 - Being in the farm business, having repeat purchases is something that everyone strives for. It's important to not only influence a first purchase, but also subsequent purchases.
- Lifetime value of customers
 - Recognizing the fact that many of your customers could come back to you year after year is very important. When you aggregate all of the sales that you make to a particular customer month after month, year after year, you tend to view their "value" to your business in a different way. Take some time to write down the amount of revenue that a customer has to you over their lifetime. The results may influence your plans to attract and retain customers.
- Satisfaction rate
 - Reach out to your customer base and ask them for feedback on how you are doing. The feedback can be used to improve your services and products and it can also improve the relationship between you and your customer base.
- Brand Advocacy
 - Encourage satisfied customers to "share the good news" about your business. The most important marketing tactic is influencing "word of mouth" sharing. It can be very positive for a business, but it can also be very negative for a business, that's why it is important to always have a plan and to carefully listen to your customer base.

Community Growth Tactics

- Create a customer engagement plan. How do you want to reach out to your customers so that they are informed about your business offerings?
- Create a calendar. How often do you want to email people? How often do you want to post on social media? How often are you going to place new messaging on your website (like blogging)?
- Encouraging sharing. Influence people to share your services by goodwill or incentivize them with discounts.



About Us

UVM Extension Agricultural Business engages with farm, forest and maple enterprises using valuable planning and educational resources to promote a strong agricultural economy. Our experienced team delivers one-on-one, small group and online learning opportunities that enhance decision-making and viability. Our programs and research provide direction for key stakeholders to advance initiatives that improve business outcomes in a dynamic agricultural sector.

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