



Author - Christina Weese

Christina Weese is a graphic designer who brings a wide array of corporate experience to the table and is always excited to help horse owners apply marketing and design principles to their own small businesses. Since 2003 she has produced many websites and print designs specifically for equestrian clients. A horse owner for over fifteen years, Christina enjoys starting young horses, and is a certified Equine Canada instructor.

Getting Started

"Advertising is what you do when you can't go to see somebody personally."

- Jack Trout, writer for Forbes.com

A marketing plan is a natural outgrowth of your business plan. A business plan should give you the following starting points: your target market(s), your marketing budget for the year, and a set of goals you can use to measure the effectiveness of your marketing.

If you have no idea what you should be budgeting for your marketing plan, 10% of your projected gross revenue for the year is considered to be a fairly standard starting point. What's more important is to set out a plan, decide what the goals are, track costs and results as you go, and be able to use that information to improve your plan next year.

Three important networks: local, breed & discipline.

Any equine business will use a mix of these three networks in some proportion. If you are a lesson barn focusing on beginners and amateurs, you might focus heavily on your local market – people who are nearby and who need not have any previous horse connections.

If you are marketing high-end hunter/jumpers, you'll probably focus heavily on your discipline network and not much in your local non-horse market – unless you're Spruce Meadows. They've found very successful ways to incorporate their local market, strengthening their shows and the local equine community in the process.

Links:

Interactive Business Planner <http://www.cbsc.org/ibp>

SCORE http://www.score.org/learning_center.html

How to prepare a marketing plan http://www.acoa.ca/e/business/marketing_plan/index.shtml

Build an online marketing plan <http://www.canadaone.com/tools/marketing/questionnaire.html>

How-to: Bring Traffic to the Website

Tips for generating traffic are available as a free download from www.christinaweese.net . Go to Links & Resources, look for "Tips to Bring Traffic to your Website."

How-to: Photography

The photography presentation is available as a free download from www.christinaweese.net . Go to Links & Resources, look for "How to Improve Your Website Photography."

How-to: Copywriting for Websites

Copywriting tips are available as a free download from www.christinaweese.net . Go to Links & Resources, look for "How to Improve Your Website Copy."

How-to: Track Website Results

“Making assumptions is natural, refusing to test them is a mistake.”

- Jeanie Daniel Duck, The Change Monster

The traffic tracking tips are available as a free download from www.christinaweese.net . Go to Links & Resources, look for “How to Track Visitors on your Website.”

Internet Tools

Online tools are a relatively new trend and a lot of opportunities have opened up with the spread of high-speed internet. Instead of purchasing an application and installing it in your computer, applications are now being made available online.

Many advantages:

- server security and backup efficiency is often much higher than on a home computer
- access from any computer; access from multiple computers - data is available to be shared with many people; there are also ways to control who is viewing your data (private vs public)

Harvest www.getharvest.com

Google Tools > Go to Google.com and click more>>

GoogleDocs <http://docs.google.com>

Google Calendar <http://calendar.google.com>

Flickr www.flickr.com

Create slideshows from Flickr photos www.slideflickr.com

Facebook www.facebook.com

YouTube www.youtube.com

PayPal www.paypal.com

Blogger www.blogger.com

Horse Logs www.horselogs.com

Banner ads

- relatively cheap to experiment with (as compared to print ads)
- sold per 1000 impressions (views) or per number of clickthroughs
- should offer clickthrough tracking

Online communities & forums

- use your website in your posting signature

Non-internet tools:

1. Use all available cross-marketing opportunities – if you are taking your stallion to an important show, take out a business card ad in the program to let people know he'll be there.
2. Use free marketing!! Make a list of five print and five web publications – part of your local/provincial, discipline, or breed network – and send them news releases from your farm. Even a brief 50 words for a Barn News column is fine. Don't forget to include your local paper, which is always looking for human interest stories.

3. Make sure you put your website address on everything – business cards, email signature, forum posting signatures, etc