

PRO TRAINER

NRHA 

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL REINING TRAINERS FALL 2023

USE THE POWER OF AI
NEW TECH COULD HELP YOUR
BUSINESS RUN SMOOTHER

PLUS:

Capitalize On Curb Appeal
Paying Quarterly Taxes
Be A Good Neighbor



FALL/23

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PRO TRAINER

NRHA

FALL 2023

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PRO TRAINER NEWS

PEOPLE, REPORTS, EVENTS



Sire & Dam Program

Getting its start in 1966, the NRHA Sire & Dam Program continues to provide significant benefits to participants while also helping to support NRHA. Both stallion and mare owners can take advantage of the bonuses offered by the program. The 2023/2024 program runs November 21, 2023, through January 8, 2024.

Why consider participating in this program and encouraging your customers to be part of it? The many benefits for everyone involved—from stallion owners to mare owners to offspring owners.

Stallions participating in the program are eligible for NRHA Futurity and Derby Sire awards, including cash, plus they receive promotion through program advertisement. Mare owners have the opportunity to purchase breedings that they may not otherwise have access to at reduced rates. Sire & Dam offspring owners have their horses automatically eligible to compete in the NRHA Futurity and NRHA Derby—no nomination required. Sire & Dam Offspring receive reduced entry fees (up to 50% off) for the NRHA Futurity and NRHA Derby and have later entry deadlines for both major events.

If you want to enroll a stallion you stand/own in the Sire & Dam program, donate a breeding.

Breeding contracts can be donated to the annual online auction or as a buyback or private sale.

You can find more information about the long-standing program at nrha.com/siredam. For questions, please contact Sire & Dam Program director Haley Carmen at (405) 766-5862 or hcarmen@nrha.com. ■

NRHA Pro Trainer

2023 NRHA Hall of Fame Inductees & More

As the reining industry reaches new audiences and continually breaks records, it becomes even more important to acknowledge and celebrate those who helped pave the way for success. Since 1986, NRHA has been doing just that with the NRHA Hall of Fame and, more recently, the NRHA Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Award. With the help of the Reining Horse Foundation (RHF), these individuals, their achievements, and their contributions to the industry are celebrated and remembered.

“As committee chair, I believe this group is one of the strongest we have put forward,” said Rick Clark, NRHA Past President and current Director-at-Large. “Our committee was unanimous on every one of them as a selection to put forward, and I can say I have had the pleasure of knowing each of them personally. What they have meant to our industry, whether it was showing or owning a horse, and what they give back to the association is priceless and has shaped where we are today.”

2023 inductees are:

- Dell Hendricks
- Robert “Bob Mac” McDonnell
- Gunnatrashya

Additionally, longtime member and judge Dave Belson and the dynamic duo of Jenifer Reynolds and Chris Cook of Sandbur Productions were also announced as the NRHA Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Award recipients for 2023.

These honorees will be recognized on Wednesday, November 29, during Sliders’ Night Out, presented by Toyon Ranch, held at the OKC Fairgrounds during the 2023 NRHA Futurity and Adequan® North American Affiliate Championships. For details on how to become a Hall of Fame table host, an event donor, or to reserve individual seats, contact RHF Executive Director Leslie Baker at rhf@nrha.com or (405) 946-7400, ext. 106.

Raise A Million Is a Strong Repeat

BY LESLIE BAKER

Reiners love consistent performances, and that's a strong description of the Reining Horse Foundation's Raise A Million Auction. After wrapping up its third consecutive year, courtesy of The Run For A Million, the fundraising event continues to raise important dollars for the charitable arm of the NRHA.

A condensed live auction format preceded the youth and Million Dollar Competition draw parties on August 18. The Raise A Million attracted lots of attention in a new location at the Live Festival Stage and included a margarita happy hour, compliments of Clark Reining Horses LLC and Santa Hill Ranch.

Six lots from generous donors generated \$121,500 in revenue, with NRHA Professional Steve Ross teaming up with Western industry icon Pam Minick to sell the items. The highest-selling lot was an adventure to Italy for six purchased by Paul and Susan Simonson for \$48,000. The itinerary includes stops at the show barns of Elementa and NRHA Professional Manuel Cortesi.

NRHA Professional Cira Baeck and non pros Mandy McCutcheon and Gina-Maria Schumacher came together as the three women competing in the Million Dollar Reining and donated signed hats. Their package was enhanced with a gift certificate for a 100X custom hat courtesy of Shorty's Caboy Hattery.

"We haven't quite raised a million total, but we're knocking on the door," said Tim Anderson, RHF president. "The opportunity we've had from the Raise A Million Auctions in just three years has been significant to the ways RHF is impacting the reining community.



NRHA Professional and Western icon Pam Minnick emceed the Raise A Million auction, held during The Run For A Million.

We cannot say thank you enough to Taylor Sheridan, the TRFAM show management, donors, buyers, and RHF volunteers." ■



Among the items donated were cowboy hats signed by the women competing the The Run For A Million's Million Dollar Reining.

Donations

The Run For A Million Show Headstall

Donated by Bob's Custom Saddles, an NRHA Corporate Partner

Original Art, Libre Oeste, Mixed-Media on Collage

Created and Donated by Duke Beardsley

Italy Wine & Horses Travel Adventure for Six

Donated in part by Spooks Gotta Spark

Reining Power. Women Power. Signed Memorabilia Featuring the Women Competing in the 2023 TRFAM Million Dollar Competition, Plus a Certificate for a 100X Custom Hat from Shorty's Caboy Hattery

Donated by Cira Baeck, Mandy McCutcheon, Gina-Maria Schumacher, and Shorty's Caboy Hattery, an NRHA Corporate Partner

The American Performance Horseman Exclusive VIP Offering & Premium Seating

Run For the Roses/2024 Kentucky Derby Experience

Donated by Tim Anderson and Rick Clark

NRHA Event Calendar

Please visit nrha.com and ReinerSuite™ for the most updated information.

October 1

Final NRHA Futurity payment due

Final Sire & Dam Futurity payment due

NRHA Futurity rider designations due

Riders and divisions may be changed through close of business November 1 with no penalty.

October 12

Online steward recertification

Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

October 15–17

Judge applicant seminar & school
Kreuth, Germany

For more information, contact Nadine Elsner at info@nrha.de.

October 20

Deadline for new NRHA Futurity Sponsors and new NRHA Corporate Partners to receive NRHA Futurity amenities

For more information, contact Christy Landwehr at clandwehr@nrha.com.

November 1–5

NRHA European Derby
Lyon, France

For more information, visit nrhaeuropeanderby.com.

November 3–5

Judges' School
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

November 5

NRHA Futurity stall reservations due

November 21–December 2

NRHA Futurity & Adequan® North American Affiliate Championships
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

For more information, visit nrhafuturity.com.

November 23

Thanksgiving Buffet hosted by RHF
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Advance ticket purchase is recommended. For more information, visit nrhafuturity.com/events.

November 29

Sliders' Night Out,
presented by Toyon Ranch
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Donor opportunities are available. Email Leslie Baker at lbaker@nrha.com.

November 30

NRHA Markel Futurity Sales
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
For more information, visit nrha.com/sales or email sales@nrha.com.

November 30

NRHyA Stallion Breeding Auction
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Affiliate Regional Championships

Tentative and subject to change.

Northwest

September 30–Oct. 7
Nampa, ID

Southwest

October 5–8
Scottsdale, AZ

North Central

October 12–15
Lincoln, NE

Mexico

October 13–15
Cadereyta, Nuevo León, Mexico

NRHA

MARKEL FUTURITY SALES

One-Day Super Sale!

Oklahoma State Fair Park • Oklahoma City



MARKEL®



NOVEMBER 30, 2023

CONSIGNMENTS DUE SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

Visit nrha.com/sales or contact Angie Honeywell at sales@nrha.com or (405)946-7400 x 123

LEGAL ACTION

INSIGHTS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS SAFE

Keep It Neighborly

AS CITIES GROW, MORE AND MORE EQUINE PROFESSIONALS COULD FIND THEMSELVES AT ODDS WITH NEW NON-HORSEY NEIGHBORS. HANDLING A DISPUTE BEFORE IT GETS SERIOUS CAN BE THE BEST WAY TO PRESERVE YOUR BUSINESS.

BY KRISTIN PITZER

Robert Frost coined the phrase “good fences make good neighbors,” and in an urban setting, that might be true. But when you bring livestock into the mix, even good fences can’t prevent flies, smells, dust, or people with bad intentions from crossing a boundary.

As an equine professional, especially if you’re located on the outskirts of a city, you need to be extremely respectful in how you treat your

neighbors, said Jordan Willette, an attorney based in Phoenix and San Francisco. As city centers sprawl out into what was once ranch land, more and more conflicts are bound to arise between city folk and horse owners. Unfortunately, in many situations, lawsuits will likely favor the non-equestrian neighbor and end with the horse owner either looking for a new place to live or being subjected to certain restrictions. →



You might've moved into your facility surrounded by open space. But chances are, due to urban sprawl, you could have new, close neighbors before you're ready. Learn how to make the best of it here.



If you discover a new neighborhood is being built around your ranch, take some initiative and introduce yourself to the new homeowners.

Be a Good Neighbor

Neighborly disputes between horse owners and suburbanites are becoming more and more frequent as cities grow and expand beyond their initial footprint into what was once “the country.” When that happens, conflicts can occur just from everyday life as a horse owner. Dust blowing from arenas, smells drifting over from pastures and manure piles, and excessive amounts of flies can make life on bordering properties unpleasant.

If neighbors’ concerns go ignored by the equine facility, and property owners escalate things to the city government, the stable owner could lose the ability to keep horses on the property, or things can even turn malicious. There have been cases where angry neighbors attempted to retaliate by poisoning horses or spooking them while being ridden, resulting in human and animal injuries.

“You don’t want to create such a negative environment for your neighbors that it becomes what we call a nuisance suit,” Willette said. “I’ve been aware of cases where there was a barn in the middle of the city, and the flies and dust created a public nuisance. It affects the homeowners around that farm and their ability to enjoy their properties. If the horse barn loses the suit, the horses could be forced to leave. You don’t want to have it get that severe.”

By being a good neighbor, you can likely keep any complaints from ever forming. Keep your arenas and pastures watered down to prevent dust from blowing, have your manure piles hauled off regularly, practice fly-prevention measures, and keep noise levels to a minimum, for starters. Even maintaining the curb appeal of your property can help it become a beloved part of the community, rather than the local eyesore.

Talk It Out When Possible

Usually, the best way to handle neighborly disputes is by talking things out in person. This way, a lawsuit is less likely to be filed, and things can get resolved more quickly and less expensively.

“My best advice would be to try to have a conversation,” Willette said. “It doesn’t hurt to be the good neighbor from the olden days where you walk over and introduce yourself. Handle it as informally and politely as possible.”

If you discover a new neighborhood is being built around your ranch, take some initiative and introduce yourself to the new homeowners. One way you can do this is by mailing flyers or business cards out to the community that share your name and contact information. As an added bonus, if you offer lessons, this can be a great way to garner some new local business.

Befriending your neighbors might seem like a lot of work, especially when your schedule is

already packed with training, events, veterinary appointments, and property maintenance. But, maintaining those relationships can go a long way should problems come up in the future.

For one, they might be more willing to overlook a slight nuisance, like a temporary increase in fly activity during the summer. Second, they'll probably be less likely to resort to litigation. As long as you're receptive to constructive criticism and willing to make changes when needed, you can keep most conflicts out of court.

Bring in a Third Party

Being friendly with your neighbors won't solve every problem. There will always be people who can't be pleased or are just plain unfriendly. If your safety, or the safety of your animals, is ever in question, don't be afraid to call in a third party, such as the police.

"Even if they can't do anything, sometimes that contact from a law enforcement officer puts people on notice and can help resolve the problem," Willette said. "Sometimes it's better to get that third party involved and say hey, we can't handle this anymore."

Law enforcement might have to get involved if people intentionally trespass on the property, for instance. Whether it's done maliciously, where someone continuously dumps grass clippings on your property even though you've asked them not to, or ignorantly, like children climbing through your fence to pet your horses, you'll want to put an end to it as quickly as possible for both the animals' and humans' safety.

"If it becomes a serious issue, trespassing is a criminal charge—there's also civil trespassing, but at the end of the day, if somebody's repetitively trespassing and it's becoming an issue, it's going to be a safety concern," Willette said. "Civil cases work much slower than criminal actions, so if you need something

done fast, a criminal complaint is going to be the way to go. That has to be done through law enforcement because it has to be enough that the state, county, or city will file charges."

It's almost inevitable that conflicts between non-horsey neighbors and horse owners will develop at some point. If you can set a good relationship from the beginning and respect your neighbors' spaces, you can likely get through the disputes with just a friendly conversation. Otherwise, be aware that the law may not be on the horse owner's side. If all else fails, it might be time to look for a property farther outside the city. ■

This article is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute individualized legal advice. Contract-drafting and business disputes can be very complex. When questions arise based on specific situations, please seek a knowledgeable attorney for advice.

Meet the Expert

Jordan Willette, an attorney at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP, focuses her practice in civil litigation, including equine law, products liability, and business disputes. She graduated in 2017 from the Sandra Day O'Connor

School of Law at Arizona State University, where she was named a Trial Advocacy Fellow and served as a judicial extern at the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One. When she's not in the court room, Willette enjoys riding and is the fundraising chairman for Horses Help, a therapeutic riding organization for children with disabilities. A reiner for 16 years, Willette still owns her youth horse, Whizin In The Dirt.



DOLLARS & SENSE

5 Ways to Build Trust

Your customer's faith in you is important in any business, but especially in one where their investments are both financial and emotional. The monetary costs of keeping horses in training, maintaining a horse's health and wellness, and competing are high. But they can pale in comparison to the emotional investment when a client's child is involved or when they're emotionally committed to their horse. For these reasons, trust might be the most important part of your business, and it must be nurtured and supported for the duration of the relationship.

How can you gain more trust from your customers and potential newcomers to your barn? Here are four tips.

Tip 1: Be transparent.

Calling someone transparent might mean you can see right through them and their motivations, but in a business sense, this is crucial. Transparency comes in the form of billing, discussing a horse's potential, going over expenses involved in various treatments and preventative measures, and your intentions with the horse and the customer. Authenticity and a commitment to honesty get you far in the effort to earn trust.

Tip 2: Be consistent.

If you're all over the place in terms of your business goals, where you intend to compete, and what methods you'll take to get there, it erodes trust from your client. Consistency equates to reliability, and that supports trustworthiness. Your consistency even shows in your branding—using set colors, logos, and language in your marketing shows consistency and reliability.



Trust is the cornerstone of your business. Be sure you pay attention to these tips achieve a high level of trust from your customers.

Tip 3: Communicate.

This goes hand in hand with being transparent. Your customers rely on you for information no one else can provide. If they call for updates on horses or information on medical decisions, it's your job to answer or call them back in a timely fashion. Unanswered calls and ghosting customers causes uneasiness and, ultimately, erodes trust.

Tip 4: Deliver.

We all know that circumstances change, horses don't progress as expected, accidents happen, and more. This can lead to the need to course-correct or adjust the plan. If you have communicated the plan as it evolves, it's then your responsibility to deliver. Some like to set a lower bar for perceived over-delivering on promises; some deliver right on target with what they expect. The key is not to under-deliver, especially without communication, consistency, and transparency. ■



Establish yourself as an expert to best use word-of-mouth to market your business.

Word-of-Mouth Marketing

In the Spring 2023 issue of the *Pro Trainer*, we covered a situation where word-of-mouth could be detrimental to your business in the face of libel or defamation. However, in most cases, word-of-mouth marketing can be a huge boost to your business when handled thoughtfully. Here are three ways you can use this virtually free method to promote your business.

Be an Authority

Simply by becoming an NRHA Professional, you've established yourself as having authority on reining horses. You further your clout by establishing your accomplishments, producing a website for your business, creating engaging social media, and interacting with fans/potential customers.

Make Employees Ambassadors

Your employees represent your brand and who you are. By building a culture that encourages everyone to work in the same direction, with the same core philosophies, your employees become brand ambassadors.

Keep It Positive

When interacting with potential new clients, keep the experiences positive. Speak well of others (or not at all), talk about the great things happening in our industry, and avoid controversial topics that could be misinterpreted and passed along without the original intent. The same applies when answering people's comments on social media: stay positive, and don't engage with negativity. ■

Fall Marketing Tips

You're headed into what's probably the busiest part of your year. All that time out on the road, earning titles and checks, takes a lot out of you. But don't let it take the steam out of your marketing efforts for your business. Here are a few quick and simple thought-starters to get you going in your effort to promote your business and gain new customers.

Check the *Pro Trainer* archives. You can find the last few years' installments of the *Pro Trainer* online at nrha.com/protrainer. A lot of the content in each issue is what we like to call "evergreen," meaning it's basically timeless information that you can use at any phase in your business' development. Looking at previous issues can spur ideas and help you see things in a different way to help your business. BONUS: In this issue, you'll get a full feature about the best ways to market your business at an event on page 18.

Update your Profile. We've said it over and over, but this is a prime time to ensure that your profile on ReinerSuite™ is up-to-date. (Or complete, if you haven't provided all the information.) Then, when your name gets called at a big event, a potential customer can find you on nrha.com/findapro to learn more about you, your business, and how to learn more about becoming one of your riders or owners. Find instructions on page 12.

Attend other events. Making time for yet another horse show might not be a top priority for you, but with the volume of high-profile events happening this time of year, it could be a great opportunity to introduce yourself to riders from other disciplines, check out training trends in other styles of riding, and pick up a few marketing hints for what's working in their part of the horse-show world.

Leverage back-to-school. During the fall, many schools have back-to-school fall festivals and carnivals that could probably use a little Western influence. Check with area schools—or even your own kids' schools—to see how your business could be part of their fall events. This gives you the chance to give back to your community while also promoting your business. ■



New changes to SBA loans could make them easier to obtain to help grow your business.

Small Business Loans

According to a May 2023 article on allbusiness.com, major changes are approved for the Small Business Association's 7(a) and 504 loan programs. The positive aims are to streamline the loan application process, expand the availability and types of lenders, and make it easier for small businesses to gain funds.

If you're unfamiliar, a 7(a) loan has a maximum of \$5 million and can be used toward real estate and equipment purchases. The 504 loan program is maxed at \$5.5 million per borrower and is used for real estate and land loans, too. The most notable change is the expansion of approved lenders for these loans, which is likely thanks to the Payroll Protection Program loans we became familiar with during COVID. In theory, this means SBA could increase the number of loans issued while decreasing the application timeline. Loan evaluation will be based on credit report, cash flow, and equity/collateral. Additionally, the requirement for hazard insurance and collateral on 7(a) and 504 loans under \$500,000 is eliminated. Check with your bank to learn about SBA loans and if they could be a good fit for your business, as well as for any detailed financial advice. SBA.gov is also an outstanding resource for information about growing your small business. ■

Stay Connected

Are you connected with your NRHA Professionals peers and the association? Be sure you stay in touch with the following communication outlets so you don't miss any news, discussions, requests for input, and opportunities to volunteer.

JOIN THE FACEBOOK GROUP. It's super-easy to join. Get on Facebook, and search "NRHA Professionals" or, in the digital issue, click this [link](#). Request to join the group, and Sara Honegger will approve your entry if you have a current Professional membership. This group can be a terrific resource for many things. Post when you're looking to find shared lodging for help at a show, hiring new help, have questions for the group, and even to get access to the digital *NRHA Pro Trainer*.

JOIN THE TEXT LINE. Join the NRHA Professionals text line by clicking this [link](#) in the digital issue. Here you'll get notifications of important meetings, information from the association, and receive a link to the digital *NRHA Pro Trainer* each quarter.

UPDATE YOUR PROFILE. Go to ReinerSuite™ and click on "Trainer Profile" to update your phone number, address, focus of your business, logo, accolades, and more to help new customers find you when they use the Find A Pro button to locate a professional. ■



There are three easy ways you can stay in communication with your association and your professionals' group.

LEFT PHOTO BY ADOBE STOCK RIGHT PHOTO BY MIKE MEYERS ON UNSPLASH

SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINER

BECOME THE SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

Is Threads for You?

YET ANOTHER NEW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM HAS HIT THE APP STORE. WILL THREADS WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

You probably heard this summer about a new app that resembles the design of X (formerly called Twitter) called Threads. It was developed by Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram. Within the first 24 hours of launching, there were reports of 30 million downloads. But just because it's a shiny new outlet doesn't mean you have to sign up—or that it's good for your business. Here, we'll explain what Threads is all about.

You Don't Have to Do It All

Before we begin, a reminder: Having a presence on all social media platforms just to say you have a presence there isn't helpful to your marketing efforts. Always remember that if you don't have time or interest in contributing on a platform, you should reconsider being part of it. Additionally, if you don't enjoy contributing to the social scene on an app, then don't waste your time! Focus on what you can fit into your schedule, what fits your goals, and what you actually don't dread being part of.

What Makes Threads Unique?

Just like Instagram, you can post images and videos. Threads has a little more flexibility in that you can also create text-only posts (up to 500 characters), links (something Instagram has never offered), and animated gifs.

Some limitations make it unique, including that you can't use hashtags as of writing this article.

This could be limiting as far as search goes, but it takes a little weight off your shoulders. The same goes for direct messaging—it's not available on Threads at this time. Finally, if you start a Threads account and delete it, your entire Instagram account will be deleted. Always read a new platform's terms and conditions before joining.

How to Get Started

Chances are, you have an Instagram account. Begin by downloading the Threads app from your app store. Log into your business account on Instagram on the same device. Open the Threads app, and choose "Log in with Instagram." On the profile screen, click "Import from Instagram," and make any updates then click "Next." Be sure to select "Public Profile" so people can find you, and then click "Next" again. Choose to follow all the Instagram accounts you already follow that have a presence on Threads. Finally, click "Join Threads," and you're all set.

Make Your First Post

Start by introducing yourself! Tell your audience why you started your business, what you love about reining, and any interesting information about your philosophy or program.

Going forward, you can push your Instagram posts to Threads, but if you want to get the most out of it, you'll create content specifically for Threads. According to Adam Mosseri, the intent of Threads is to create conversation. →



A new social media app called Threads could be a good fit for your business.

“For those of you trying to think about what to post here on Threads versus on Instagram, my take is it’s less about text versus photos and videos and more about what public conversations you want to have,” he said. “Do you want to engage in more back-and-forth, Threads makes sense. If not, great, probably Instagram.”

Post Examples

Because Threads is largely text-based, it might be the best place to post different content types than you use on other platforms. Here are a few examples.

Example 1: Would You Rather

Would you rather never have to wrap legs again or never have to tape feet again?

Example 2: Short Tips—Bonus Points for Including Sponsors

Grooming Hack: Use a soap-dispensing dish sponge filled with purple shampoo to deep-clean white legs.

Example 3: Open Up for Questions

What are you struggling with in your riding? What questions can we answer to help you get past your current riding block?

Example 4: Build Community

We’re so excited for the NRHA Futurity! Post a pic of the horse you’ll show below so we can cheer you on, too!

Example 5: Exclusive Content

Our sponsor is offering an exclusive \$10 off your

next order with code ReinerOnThreads! Use it in the next 48 hours before it expires!

Ride the Wave

As with all social media apps, they change at the drop of a hat—sometimes even quicker. Stay on top of trends by following websites such as socialmediaexaminer.com to ensure that your efforts are on track. And always remember that your website is the only digital property you own and can’t be taken away when these platforms change and move in and out of favor. ■

Threads Posting Notes

What Can You Post?

- Text (up to 500 characters)
- Images (up to 10 per post)
- Videos (up to 5 minutes)
- Links
- Carousels
- Gifs

What Can’t You Post? (For Now, Anyway)

- Hashtags
- Direct messages
- Ads
- Pinned posts

USE AI TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
IS A HOT TOPIC IN ALL CORNERS
OF BUSINESS.
CAN IT HELP YOU WITH YOURS?



Robots aren't taking over the world yet, but AI—artificial intelligence—could help you better manage your business and give you more time in the saddle.

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

If you've been in the horse industry long enough, you might see the moniker "AI" and immediately think about the breeding barn—artificial insemination. But in terms of running your small business, AI today means something else—artificial intelligence.

Those two words can be daunting. While you might be apprehensive—or even skeptical—there are ways that AI can help your small business. This overview can serve as your entry into the technology, even though you've probably been using it longer than you think (see the sidebar on page 16).

Simply Put: What Is AI?

AI refers to a simulation of human intelligence processes—learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and perception—mimicked by a computer. There are two basic types of AI.

Narrow or weak AI is designed and trained for a specific task or a narrow range of functions.

It excels at the task it's trained for, but it can't do anything beyond its scop. Think voice assistants (Alexa and Siri), recommendation systems (Netflix's "recommended for you" list of programs), and self-driving cars.

General or strong AI hasn't yet been achieved, but would be represented by a computer with human-like cognition that can perform any intellectual task that a human can. Examples are consciousness, self-awareness, and understanding any form of knowledge. (If you watched HBO's *WestWorld*, you saw a glimpse of this concept as the robots gained more humanlike characteristics.)

Now let's get into the ways you can use it to help your business and streamline your work.

Research

You probably find yourself Googling how to fix things around the barn, how to repair your vehicle and equipment yourself, or even how

How You're Already Using AI

You probably use AI every day in your personal and business lives, but you might not know it. Here are just a few examples of how AI pops up in your day-to-day.

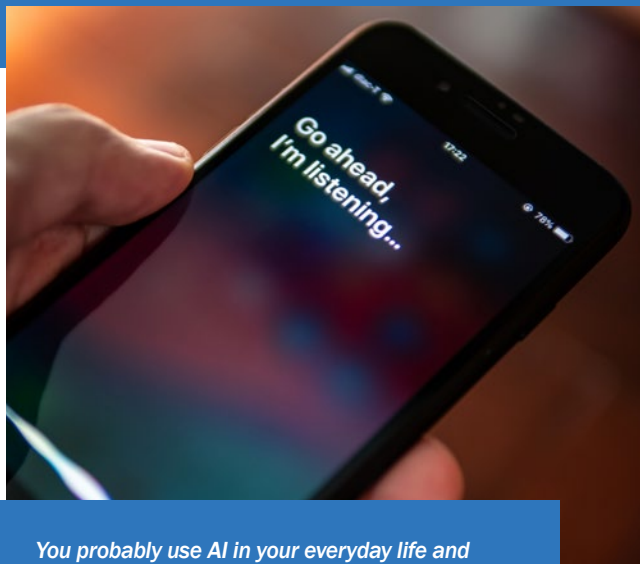
Streaming Service Recommendations: from Netflix to Spotify playlists

Voice Commands: Siri, Alexa, and Google

Maps Apps: You put in a destination, and multiple routes appear

Predictive Text: You start a search phrase, and your search engine completes your thought

Chatbots: You visit a business's website and interact with a bot for customer service



You probably use AI in your everyday life and don't even know it. Your voice assistant on your phone is just one example.

to better use the software that helps keep your business running. Using ChatGPT, you can input whatever you're researching—being as specific as you'd like—and tell the AI to prepare

instructions for your task with a certain word count to fit within your time limits. You can also input a long instruction manual and ask it to summarize it for you, so you don't have to do a deep dive if you don't want to.

Security

AI software can provide you with some peace of mind when it comes to cyber security. You probably make and accept payments online, you manage a website, and you have your social media accounts. You can find a variety of cybersecurity programs featuring AI with an online search to see what best fits your needs to protect your business.

Improve Images and Videos

If you shoot your own sale photos and videos or someone from your barn handles your photography needs, there's ample AI technology available to improve those non-professional images. For example, Sharpen AI can clean up and tighten blurry images shot indoors; the Noise Reduction button in Lightroom can do this, too. It allows you to work with the level of photography you have available in your budget. (Though a great photographer is always a sound investment!) There are even programs that create images according to your exact needs, based on prompts you provide.

Turn Text Into Audio

Maybe you've consulted on a magazine or online article, or perhaps you're writing your own memoir. Software such as Speechify can turn written words into audio for convenient listening. This means you can listen to the written document when it's convenient for you, for example, when you're driving long distances to shows. Along with magazine articles, it could be helpful with contract-reading or just for personal use.



Yes, AI could be a major investment for a large corporation, for all aspects of their global business. But there are smaller ways that it can help you, too, if you're open to learning and adapting.

Translate Documents

Reining has been global for quite some time, but with the bigger pie of international opportunities, more and more professionals find themselves buying and selling horses overseas, negotiating employment terms in foreign countries, and even just communicating with non-English-speaking fans. Software, from Google Translate (free) to Taia (more technical, but maintains context), makes it easy to remove language barriers while doing business, which streamlines your process and saves you time.

Identify and Correct Errors

Whether you've written a blog post about your latest barn hack, a technical training article for a magazine, or a contract for an employee, you can put the text into AI to detect mistakes, typing errors, and possible conflicts. ChatGPT can do this, but Grammarly is another (paid) favorite to help you write—even when you're not a writer. Insiders tip: Even professional writers employ Grammarly from time to time!

Marketing

This could be a real game-changer in terms of

the time you put into marketing your business. From generating blog articles for your website to posts on social media, AI like ChatGPT and Jasper can do the heavy lifting for you. You can instruct the program to “Write a social media post about the history of the NRHA Futurity,” for example. However, it's critical that you always fact-check and proofread your results. You also want to ensure that the voice and tone of the written pieces from AI match your brand and goals so that you have consistency and don't degrade the trust you've developed with your clients and audience.

Key Takeaways


AI might seem intimidating, but it's worth looking into to see how it can help your business. Here are a few things to keep in mind on your AI journey.

- Always proofread and fact-check. Even AI isn't infallible.
- Look at all your options. Many basic AI software is free or low-cost, and the investment might free up enough of your time to make it worthwhile.
- Keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities.
- Consider hiring a consultant who could help you identify AI technology that's best for your needs. Again the monetary investment could open your time to your own special talents and skills. ■

Resources

12 Key Benefits of AI for Small Businesses, [techtarget.com](https://www.techtarget.com)

A Step-by-Step Process for Implementing AI in a Small Business, [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)



Clean and functional tops all when it comes to presenting a great first impression to potential new customers and keeping the ones you have.

Curb Appeal **MATTERS**

BY KEEPING THEIR PROPERTIES IN THE BEST SHAPE POSSIBLE, NRHA PROFESSIONALS CAN MAKE GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS ON CLIENTS AND PRESERVE THE CONFIDENCE OF THEIR EXISTING CUSTOMERS.

BY KRISTIN PITZER
PHOTOS BY LAURA SCHOELLER

Imagine, as a prospective client, visiting training facilities for your futurity prospect. One facility is immaculate: the floors are swept, tack is put away, and the overall aesthetic is just nice to look at. Another looks a lot rougher around the edges, with broken fencing, unkempt landscaping, and rusting equipment abandoned where it last stopped. Which would you pick to leave your prized investment?

It may seem shallow to some people, but the curb appeal of your training facility is very important in your equine business. The grounds don't necessarily have to be elaborate—simply making the effort to maintain a facility in top shape can leave a nice impression. No matter if you're a multimillion-dollar rider or an up-and-comer, having an aesthetically pleasing facility can help gain new clients and give a sense of security to those who are already customers.

First Impressions Count

From the moment a client drives up to a training business, what they first see determines whether they continue along the driveway or turn around and find someplace else to leave their horse. Therefore, you have one chance to make a good first impression. If your facility doesn't appear to be safe or in working order, most clients will walk away.

"I was told when I was very young that your trucks, your trailers, your place are just like a billboard for your business," said Bob Avila, an NRHA Futurity Open Champion who's now based in Scottsdale, Arizona. "When you drive into someone's place, it's like, 'Wow, this is nice,' or 'Oh, I don't want to leave my horse here.' That is what people look at."

Avila likened customers shopping for a training facility to people who are house-hunting. Houses

are staged in a way to draw potential buyers inside. If someone walks into a house and immediately has a bad feeling about it, they're not going to stay long enough to look around at whatever nice features the house possesses.

"I think anybody can put themselves in that position where you look at something and say, 'hey, I feel comfortable leaving my kid or my horse there,'" Avila said. "If you can answer it, 'yes,' do it. But if you answer it, 'no,' go somewhere else."

A facility doesn't have to be "fancy" to have a nice curb appeal. Mowing the grass, weed eating, and fixing broken fences can go a long way toward presenting a property that's well-cared-for. In turn, that can tell clients that the horses inside are also watched over with the same degree of attention.

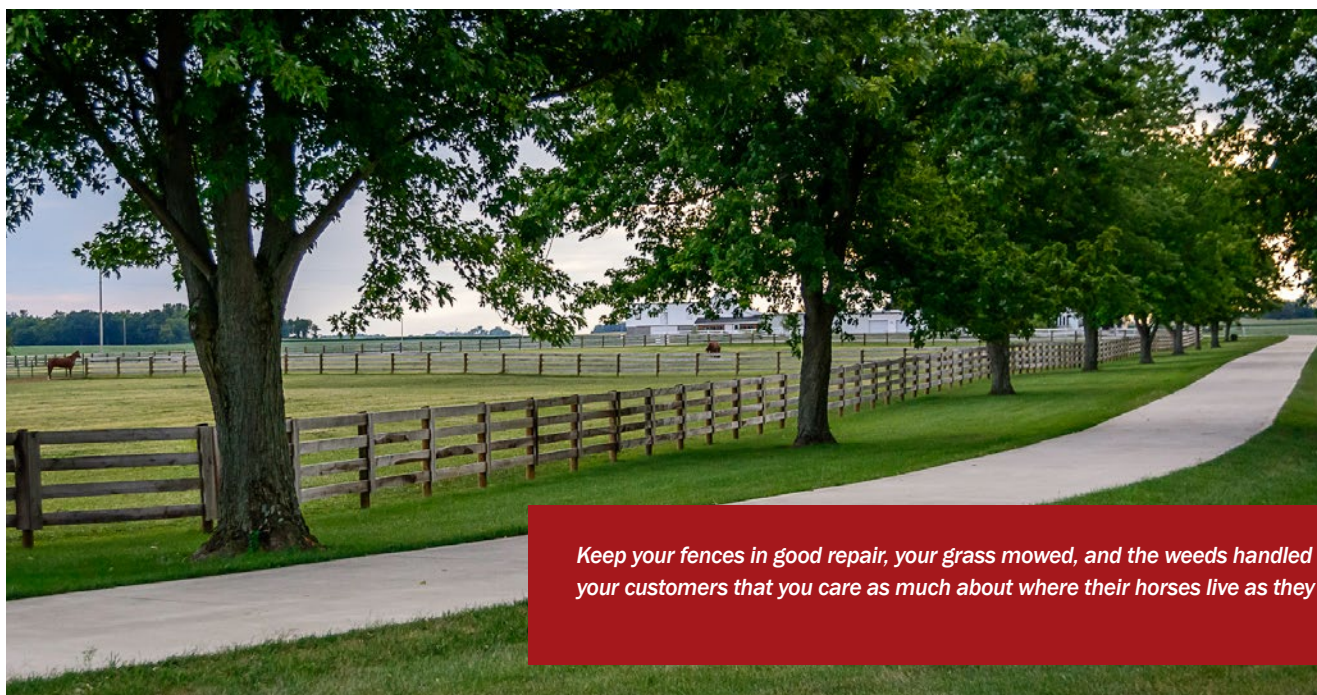
"I think it's important for any horse trainer, really," said Shannon Quinlann Hill of Hill Performance Horses based in Sharpsville, Pennsylvania. "You want to give off a

professional, high-end, safe, clean vibe for your environment. Nobody wants to go to a barn that's run down, messy, dirty, or unsafe. I certainly wouldn't pay for my horse to be there."

Robin Schoeller, an NRHA Professional based in Bloomingburg, Ohio, agreed, saying curb appeal is one of the most important things for a trainer's business. He said if his first impression of a facility tells him the person cannot take care of their own things, it's likely they wouldn't be able to care for his horse properly, either.

"I'm just a very particular person as far as keeping everything clean and neat outside, around the barn, and on the property," Schoeller said, who has the Aristotle quote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit," hanging next to his office. "I like everything mowed and weeded. I think it benefits the overall appearance. And if you walk into my barn, I try to keep it as clean as I can.

"It's hard to clean up every day, but it's part of our routine," Schoeller added. "The overall



Keep your fences in good repair, your grass mowed, and the weeds handled to ensure your customers that you care as much about where their horses live as they do.

appearance, to me, is very important, and I think my clients appreciate it, too.”

Schoeller said everything has its place in his barn, from bridles to saddles to polo wraps. Florida-based trainers Mark and Shannon Rafacz go one step further to cut down on clutter by allowing their clients to only leave saddles, pads, and bridles at their facility. For everything else—grooming supplies, girths, polo wraps—the Rafaczes charge a biannual fee so they can provide those items and keep them put away in their designated spots. That way, they aren’t dealing with individual tack trunks everywhere.

“We try to keep all of our tack rooms in order,” Shannon Rafacz said. “Mark is a firm believer in making sure everything has a place and everything’s organized. It’s very much a working barn, but it’s generally always in order. We work hard to make sure that the grass is always cut down, and it just looks good because first impressions are everything. I think that’s the bottom line in life.”

Worth the Effort

Whether a facility is owned or rented by a trainer, it takes money and time to maintain its appearance. Those are both investments that’ll pay out in dividends, though, when it comes down to client satisfaction.

“There’s a big budget that needs to be put aside for that,” Schoeller said. “Mowing the grass, keeping the mower serviced and fueled up, weed eating—just to buy all that equipment and keep it serviced and running, that’s a big expense. And you can’t forget about the labor. You either have to do it yourself or you have to hire somebody who does it all for you. So that’s an expense, also.”

Rafacz said she has a code for repairs and maintenance on her taxes, and general upkeep

alone can cost around \$10,000 to \$15,000 on their 10-acre property.

Rafacz and Schoeller said it’s a 24/seven job maintaining their facilities, and most of the time, the work must be done after their day jobs training horses. Rafacz said Mark is often out past-dark trying to finish up tasks like tree trimming and fence fixing after a full day of riding.

For Schoeller, who designed his property with the help of his father and sister-in-law, time is put aside on Saturdays to get projects done around the farm. That’s after spending all week long doing minor maintenance tasks every day.

“We always pick a couple of tasks we want to get done,” Schoeller said. “It’s sometimes not possible to do it all, but we’ll pick a couple, and we might clean the tack room on Saturday and wipe the stall fronts off the next Saturday. I take really good care of my equipment; it’s a lot of value that’s sitting out there.”

The work and costs pay off, though, when clients can feel secure leaving their horses with a trainer. And for trainers somewhat off the beaten path, that word of mouth might give them an advantage when attracting clients outside the hotbed of reining activity.

“I think it’s really important [to show you can take care of your property],” Avila said. “I think the farther you are out of the Mecca, the more important it is to work at making sure you cross all the Ts and dot all the Is, as far as taking care of your place and putting a little more effort into your work.”

Function Over Form

While unique features can add to a property’s curb appeal, it’s important to remember that the facility is still a horse-training operation. As such, it needs to have amenities that are functional and not just pretty.

“Being functional is huge,” Quinlan said. “A



A safe, well-groomed riding area assures your customers that their horses have optimal training footing without safety hazards.

good layout is super-important. I think if it's not functional, it doesn't matter how pretty it is. It gives people a good feeling when they walk in, especially selling horses. We keep everything as clean as possible and put away, and I think it just creates a higher-end environment."

"Practical and useable are probably the most important things, and then how you take care of it," Avila said. "I think you've got to have a little bit of both [function and aesthetics], but I guess function would be the first thing. Like the trucks and trailers going down the road, you don't have to have the fanciest truck, but just take care of the equipment you have so when people pass you on the highway they don't go, 'I don't want my horse in that!'"

At the time the Rafaczcs purchased their acreage, the only thing on the property was a house. They were able to lay out the rest of it—a barn, arena, turnout paddocks—in a way that was best suited to their use. Mark designed the barn so that air would constantly flow through, thus protecting horses and people from the Florida heat.

"Form and function I think are extremely

important with what we do because people are just kind of coming in to do their job and leave," Rafacz said. "They want to have a nice experience."

When customers are comfortable and able to enjoy their riding time, they're more willing to leave their horses in training at a particular place. Though facility maintenance can be a large part of day-to-day business, keeping an operation in tip-top shape goes a long way toward gaining a client's trust and letting them feel secure in their horse care choice.

"I think the curb appeal of a clean, organized barn is part of customer service, to provide them with a pleasant and safe environment where they can enjoy spending their free time and be assured that their horses are taken care of," Schoeller said. "I think a lot of young trainers come in and see the big guys with all that fancy equipment and think that's exactly what they need to get clients. We designed and built our facility with our clients in mind, but it's how you take care of what you have that matters the most. That presentation and impression to current and potential clients is very important." ■

FINANCIAL TRAINER

TIPS AND INSIGHTS TO PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE

Avoid Penalties Outside the Arena: Quarterly Tax Payments

PAYING QUARTERLY TAXES IS ABOUT MORE THAN TO AVOIDING A SURPRISE AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

BY MEGAN ARSZMAN

Horse professionals, like many self-employed individuals or business owners, have a lot on their plates. We'll save you the time of reading through the short list of things you have to do today, alone, but one of the biggest things is running your business—and ensuring that business is being ran legally, so you avoid any unnecessary trouble with the United States government.

What would be one of the most important things to ensure that your business is on the up-and-up? Being cognizant of tax laws and understanding the need to pay your taxes on a quarterly basis.

But why should you pay quarterly? Here are five simple reasons to stay on top of your taxes.

Income Instability: We're not telling you anything new when we say that horse trainers often experience fluctuations in income throughout the year, depending on factors like the show season, sales, and training contracts. Quarterly tax payments help ensure that you meet your obligations in a timely manner, even if your income varies.

Self-Employment Taxes: When you operate as a self-employed individual or an independent contractor, you are responsible for paying both income taxes and self-employment taxes. These taxes cover Social Security and Medicare

contributions, which are usually withheld from employee paychecks. Paying quarterly estimates helps you keep up with these obligations.

Smoother Financial Planning: Financial planning is definitely not as fun as show season planning, but it is important for professionals. By paying your taxes quarterly, you can better manage your cash flow, thus making financial planning easier. Instead of facing a large tax bill at the end of the year, spreading out your tax payments over four quarters can help with budgeting.

Legal Requirements: Tax laws vary by jurisdiction, but there may be a requirement for individuals with a certain level of income to pay taxes on a quarterly basis. Because of tax agency requirements, failing to comply with these regulations can mean that you incur a penalty if you underpay or do not pay.

Avoid Year-End Surprises: Receiving a rather large tax bill at the end of the year is definitely not as exciting as finding out you finished as the No. 1 NRHA Professional at the end of the year. Making quarterly tax payments helps you stay informed about your tax liabilities throughout the year, thus preventing you from being surprised by a significant tax bill at the end of the year.



Paying taxes isn't a fun part of your business, but it's a critical element to ensure your financial security and good standing with the government.

"The biggest thing with quarterly taxes is that they should be paid on time," says Sarah Ellis, partner at W/E CPA in Westfield, Indiana.

Consult a tax professional or an accountant who is familiar with tax regulations in your state and as a self-employed professional. A financial professional can help you determine whether you are required to make quarterly tax payments while estimating your tax liability and ensuring that you are meeting all the obligations in a timely manner.

Do I Always Have to Pay Quarterly?

According to Ellis, you may not have to pay every quarter. It all depends on your earnings on a quarter-by-quarter basis.

"If you don't make a lot of money the first or second quarter, it's possible you only need to make a quarterly payment once or twice a year, depending on your earnings level," she says.

You should send tax payments in terms of the quarter that you earn that money. Don't really earn much of a check until you nailed a top score at the All American Quarter Horse Congress?

Send in your quarterly payment for the fourth quarter based on your earnings in that quarter.

"That's why there are quarterly taxes—the government wants the money when you earn it," Ellis says. ■

IRS CIRCULAR 230 DISCLOSURE: Pursuant to requirements imposed by the Internal Revenue Service, any tax advice contained in this communication is not intended to be used, and cannot be used, for purposes of avoiding penalties imposed under the United States Internal Revenue Code or promoting, marketing, or recommending to another person any tax-related matter. The above material has been presented in a significantly simplified format. Do not attempt to begin action on any of the above matters without first consulting your tax advisor.

Meet the Expert

Kristina Vaughn is the owner of Legit Ledgers, LLC, a bookkeeping business that serves only equine professionals, catering to the needs of horse businesses nationwide. To learn more about Vaughn's business and how she helps horse professionals keep their books straight, visit legitledgersllc.com.



NRHA Professional Code of Ethics

We, the members of the National Reining Horse Association Professionals, in carrying out our role of providing service to the reining horse industry, recognize the need to do so in a professional manner, and to represent the sport of reining in a professional manner with the highest degree of integrity.

Therefore, we have set forth the following code of ethics, which shall govern our endeavors in the industry. By signing this application, I agree to be bound by the rules of the NRHA Professional Code of Ethics. To participate in this program, I concede to maintaining a continuous individual membership with NRHA.

As a member of the NRHA Professionals, I will:

- Adhere to the professional standards of the NRHA and work to further its goals and objectives.
- Ensure that the welfare of the reining horse is paramount and that every horse shall always be treated humanely and with dignity, respect, and compassion, regardless if the horse does not reside under my direct supervision.
- Positively influence all members to refrain from any perceived misconduct or inappropriate actions towards either horses or other members.
- Conduct my affairs in the sport of reining with integrity, sincerity, and accuracy in an honest, transparent, and forthright manner.
- Act with integrity in my dealings with reining clients, other NRHA members, and the public when representing the sport of reining. In this regard, any horse shown by my spouse, client, or child will be economically owned as prescribed by applicable NRHA rules.
- Handle my reining horse business, operations, and communications (including those through social media) in a manner, which promotes a positive image of the reining horse industry.

- To fully disclose to customers the actual sales price and commissions involved in the sale or purchase of a horse.
- To not charge or receive a monetary commission, or other remuneration constituting a commission, from both buyer and seller of a horse.
- Model the proper ideals of positive sportsmanship and fair competition, and show cordial courtesy to fellow competitors, members, and Judges.

The Professional Code of Ethics is intended as a general guideline for reining professionals' behavior and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of conduct for NRHA Professionals. NRHA Professionals' conduct is also governed by NRHA Rules. This Code is intended, however, to state basic standards, which should govern the conduct of all professionals and to provide guidance to assist professionals in establishing and maintaining high standards of conduct within the reining horse industry.

This Code of Ethics generally identifies the ethical obligations of NRHA Professionals and does not substitute for, nor is it intended to substitute for, or in any way alter or modify the NRHA rules.

The members of the NRHA Professionals Committee created the NRHA Professional Code of Ethics to further promote the humane treatment of reining horses and ethical business practices. If you have questions regarding this code, please reach out to Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

