

NRHA PROFESSIONALS' MARKETING TOOLKIT

SECTION 1

YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

IDENTIFY YOUR MISSION

TAP ALL YOUR
RESOURCES

LEAD YOUR COMMUNITY

PHOTO BY JENNIFER PAULSON

NRHA 
PROFESSIONAL

Respect the Horse. Respect the Sport.

WELCOME

ARM YOURSELF WITH KNOWLEDGE TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS

You use strategy every day in your business, from your feeding and care program to each time you compete in the show pen. But do you use it in your marketing efforts?

In this first section of the NRHA Professionals' Marketing Toolkit, you'll learn to sharpen your marketing strategy by defining your purpose, tapping into all your resources, and becoming a community leader to showcase your business.

In the following weeks, you'll receive two more pieces of the toolkit. Section 2 covers everything you need to know about your website and content thought-starters. Section 3 takes you on a deep dive into social media and how to best use it to your advantage. Throughout each section, you'll find bold, underlined words and phrases. Those are live links to take you to other pages within the toolkit and to websites that offer more insight. Use this information to amplify your marketing efforts. ■

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MISSION STATEMENT



YOUR BUSINESS DESCRIPTION, FUNCTION, AND OBJECTIVES

Where It All Begins: Defining Your Mission

Welcome to your new adventure in marketing. No, you probably didn't go to college for this, nor did you think you'd ever have to dive into this kind of task when you decided to train horses for a living. But as a business owner and brand developer, a mission statement is core to your success and where your entire marketing plan begins.

Your mission statement clarifies the **why, how, and who** of your training operation. It includes a description of your business, its function, and its objectives. Here are a few mission statements from big businesses that can inspire yours.

- **Patagonia** (outdoor gear): Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.
- **American Express** (finance): We work hard every day to make American Express the world's most respected service brand.
- **IKEA** (home furnishings): To create a better everyday life for the many people.

As you can see, these statements vary in length and detail. When thinking about your mission statement, don't get bogged down in length. Instead, think about the overall impact. Here are three questions to ask yourself as you write your mission statement.

- 1. Why?** What's your reason for doing what you do? Do you train reining horses because your passion for horses spans across all aspects of your life? Do you do

it because you feel you have a special connection with horses that allows you to uniquely communicate with them? Or do you pursue this life because you have a calling for teaching and coaching riders? Your why is uniquely you.

- 2. How?** What do you do every day to accomplish your why? This can include actions like implementing your training philosophies, such as letting each horse guide the way to his specific training process.

- 3. Who?** What types of customers do you serve? General customer categories for your business could include youths and non pros, beginner riders, owners and breeders, etc.

Here are a few examples to get you started.

XYZ Performance Horses is passionate about coaching youth and non pro riders in a way that builds confidence and horsemanship specially tailored to each horse-and-rider pair.

123 Performance Horses focuses on training, buying, and selling reining horses for major aged events, from their 2-year-old year forward.

ABC Stallion Station promotes five leading NRHA sires and offers a full-service breeding operation for mare owners. ■

MARKETING MIX

PLAN YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY



Get in the Mix

YOUR MARKETING MIX HELPS DETERMINE WHERE YOU PLACE YOUR ATTENTION WHEN PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS. **BY JAMIE SAMPLES**

The key to success in your marketing efforts lies in using the right outlets for your goals and consistently promoting your business in those outlets. Here are four key elements that make up part of your successful marketing plan for your business.

1. Social Media

This topic is one hot tamale within the marketing industry. There are so many platforms, with so many gurus telling you when and what to post. How do you cut through all of the noise and truly engage your audience? The answer is simple. You have to test and measure your content with your audience to determine what they want. There's no one-size-fits-all answer.

The best way to begin the testing and measuring process is to ensure that you're posting consistently on whichever platform(s) you choose. It's important to remember that you don't have to be on every social media platform. You may feel pressured to be everywhere all the time, but please do your business a favor and focus on one or two social platforms you feel most comfortable using.

Develop content for your audience that's authentic, fun, informative, and most of all consistent! Take a peek at your older content. Which social posts performed the best? What type of content sparked the most conversation? Start taking notes, and quite simply, do more of what's worked in the past. For those of you just starting, you can gain inspiration from others in the equine industry or use a content calendar list of ideas to jumpstart your creativity.

Pro-Tip: There are social media schedulers available like **Later** and **Agorapulse** that allow you to batch-post your content. Set aside time on your calendar a few times a month to focus on developing posts for your audience.

The goal is to give them opportunities to engage with you and work with you. It's easy to get busy and forget about this; however, above all else in social media, remember that consistency is key.

2. A Website That Works

Businesses within the equine industry are notorious for out-of-date websites. In my experience, I've come across a large number of equine businesses that have extraordinary products or services; however, their websites were extremely hard to navigate. As a consumer who wanted to purchase from them or get more information about enlisting their services, it was frustrating.

Did you know that 89% of consumers shop with a competitor after a poor website user experience, and 74% of users are more likely to return to mobile-friendly websites?

I've also experienced high-functioning, beautiful websites that allowed me to navigate with ease, and the process to take the next steps was seamless. This is the type of website you must have for your equine business.

You don't have to spend \$10,000 to hire a developer and launch your website. You don't have to be a tech genius to create one on your own. There are thousands of web developers to choose from, as well as DIY options.

The No. 1 thing to remember when looking at your website as a part of your marketing strategy is that you own it. Your social media platforms could disappear at any given moment, but your website is yours! Invest in your business, and wield your website as a powerful part of your marketing plan.

3. Email Marketing

If I asked you to invest just \$1 with me and I gave you \$38 in return, would you do it? There's no catch. Just a simple exchange of money in which you get a massive return on your investment. I'm sure you said yes, right?

This is what email marketing has been doing for years. Email generates \$38 for every \$1 spent, which is a 3,800% return on investment (ROI), making it one of the most effective marketing options available. So why are you not seeing a return like this when you send an email?

Chances are, you may not be sending frequently enough, your message may be too sales-focused, you're not providing enough value, or your subject line is too

MARKETING MIX

– CONTINUED

boring to merit even opening the email. Typically, one small tweak in your email can make a world of difference.

The secrets to a successful email are to keep it short and concise, create a catchy subject line, limit the number of photos, and truly make it full of value. The reader needs a reason to keep opening your emails every month.

You can also test and measure your email campaigns. Review reports for each email sent, and take a peek at the open rate. Also, pay close attention to which links within the email were clicked on. This will give insight on what type of content your audience wants.

Your email list is also something you own. Those individuals, who signed up on your website or filled out a form to indicate they wanted to be on your email list after auditing a clinic or seeing you at an expo, are the people you want to chat with regularly. No matter what happens on any social platform, your list is yours to keep.

Regarding email marketing, I'll leave you with these impressive statistics: 99% of consumers check their email every day, and more than 50% check their email more than 10 times a day! I think it's safe to say that email marketing is incredibly powerful.

4. Authenticity

The thread that holds these strategies together is the one thing that you absolutely cannot forget. It's the tie that binds in every successful business. In every email, social media post, text message, and voicemail I receive, I can instantly feel authenticity or the lack thereof, and a lack of it will send me looking for another resource.

Vanity metrics can be thrown out the window. It doesn't matter if you have 100,000 followers on Instagram or just 23 addresses on your email list. Because of who you are, how you treat others, and how you operate your business, you'll find success. It may not happen overnight, but it *will* happen!

With authenticity at the helm, your audience will be thrilled to receive any type of communication from you. They will open every email, share every post, and spend money with you when they know you have their best interests at heart.

The Bottom Line

When consistency and authenticity collaborate in your business across your marketing efforts, you will win. You will rise. More clients will start coming. Your field of dreams will grow and grow and grow. The best is yet to come when you put in the marketing effort. ■

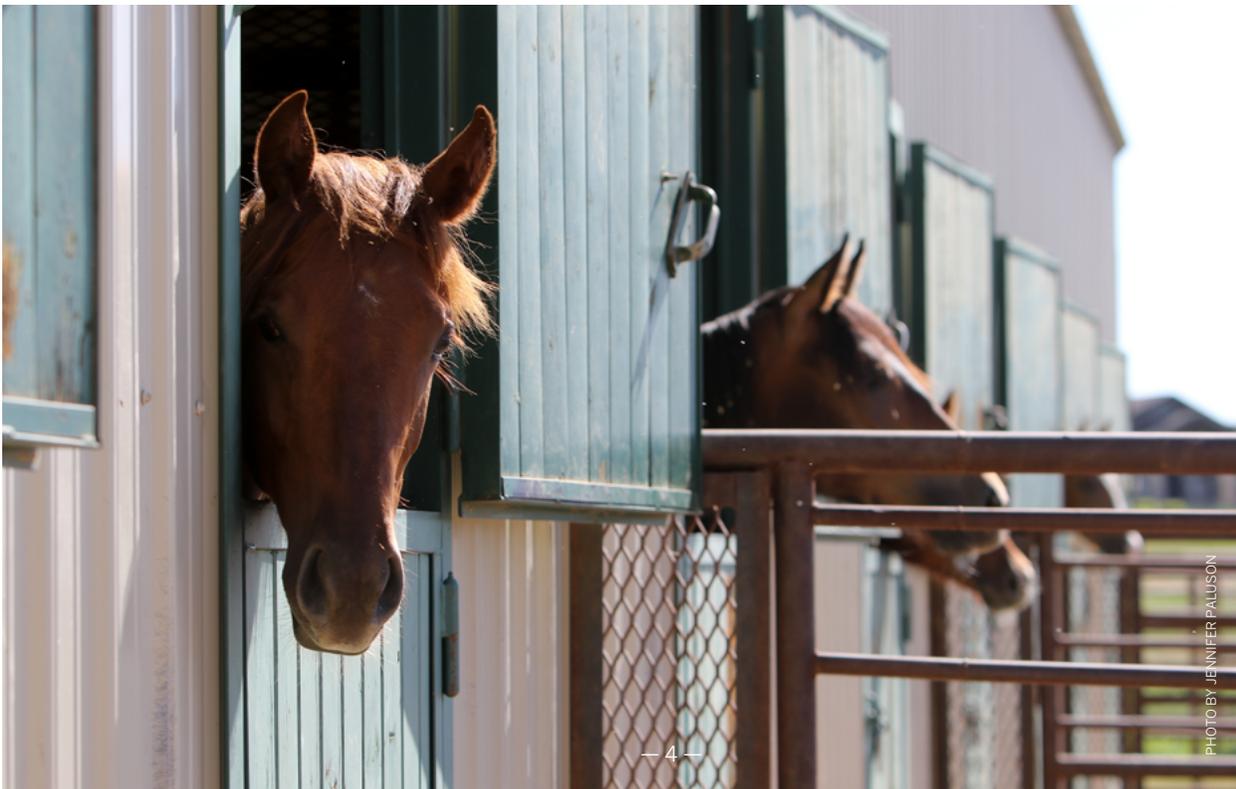


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KNOWLEDGE-SHARING



POSITION YOURSELF AS THE GO-TO EXPERT

Put Yourself Out There

IT TAKES EFFORT, BUT OFFERING YOUR EXPERTISE IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS ON A LARGE SCALE.

In your time as a professional horse trainer, you've gained a lot of knowledge about all facets of horse care, training, understanding a horse's "tells," and countless other things related to the animals you're with 24/7 of your life. Some of it might seem completely obvious to you, but it's new to non pros. Or perhaps you communicate it in a different way that makes sense to people struggling with a concept.

Your ability to share information and what you share can make you stand out among the crowd. All it takes is putting yourself out there and positioning yourself as an easy resource to work with.

How to Become the 'Go-To'

Editors and podcasters look for specific qualities in the experts they turn to for content generation. These traits are also what makes you a sought-after clinician.

1. Reliability. Returning phone calls, showing up on time, being prepared, doing what you say you can do—basically being reliable—make a horse trainer a shining star in an editor's eyes. In a time-sensitive, deadline-driven world, your commitment to getting on the phone as scheduled, returning calls in a timely manner, and providing feedback as requested can make you a hot commodity for editorial contributions, no matter your lifetime earnings.

2. Ethics. Whether it's a magazine, website, podcast, or brand, when they use you as a resource, they imply endorsement. For someone to come to you for content, they want to know you're ethical in all facets of your business. That includes business practices, customer interactions, horse sales, and training methods.

3. Communication skills. Some of the best horse trainers in the world are unable to clearly communicate their step-by-step processes. Many times, this is a

skill found in non pro and youth coaches. Content creators can recognize this trait in you when you post short instructional videos on your website and on social media, when you share ideas and thoughts, and from recommendations from your customers. Be a communicator, and let people know that you possess this valuable trait.

4. Accessibility. When a content creator reaches out to you, make yourself available. Can you do phone interviews during lunch? Can you fit in a quick photo shoot early in the morning, and then get on with your day? Make the time—everyone is busy, but there's always a way to make it work.

How to Contribute

In this age of multimedia, the options for contributing are almost endless. But a few probably make the most sense for your business.

1. Print magazines. These are becoming few and far between, and many only deliver a few times a year, but contributing to a print magazine with a strong reputation can instantly shine a spotlight on your business. This can lead to new customers, requests to contribute to other projects, and new sponsors. The key is to develop a relationship with members of the editorial team or with their freelance contributors. Find out what their needs are and identify how you can be of assistance. Be mindful not to pitch the same ideas to different editors. Nothing will turn an editor off faster than seeing a topic featured in their publication also printed in a competing magazine.

Future payoff: When the article is out, promote your presence in the magazine. The editor can send you an image of the cover or possibly a preview of your article to share. Once the article is online, share the link on your social media platforms. You can also request a PDF of the article to put on your website. Then think

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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about how you can use quotes from the article to create memes (images with words) and other posts. Section 3 of this kit offers tips for creating those graphics.

2. Digital entities. These include websites, digital publications, blogs, etc. Even major print brands are relying more and more on digital content to feed their own content monsters. You can be a key part of that. Pitch an idea for a series—maybe you blog about your 2-year-olds and your process throughout the year or provide weekly grooming tips for a set period of time. Digital outlets are especially in need of content, and the photography standards are often lower than in print, so phone images are usually acceptable.

Future payoff: Once the feature is online, share the link and promote the same way you would a print feature.

3. Podcasts. There are a few notable podcasts that stand out in terms of prominence, quality, and popularity. Don't feel like you have to start your own podcast to leverage this opportunity. Instead, find podcasts in the horse industry, and pitch to the ones that fit you best that you'd be a great guest for them to interview. When you're picked, do your preparation. See if the host will send you a list of questions to study before your interview. The host should share their editing process to give you peace of mind and confidence.

Future payoff: Promote your presence on the podcast leading up to the day it goes live so people can be sure to tune in. Once it's live, do another round of promotions. Similar to print articles, make marketing materials with quotes from the interview that might resonate with other riders.

4. Clinics. With many formats to choose from, clinics are a great way to share your knowledge as well as get noticed for future features in magazines, blogs, websites, and podcasts. You can do a traditional clinic, hosted at your own place, or ask people in another state or region if they'd like to host you. Sometimes getting out of your own backyard draws a larger audience. Some professionals are even doing online "clinics" via Facebook Live. In terms of leveraging content from the clinic, think about the questions your attendees ask and how you can pitch that information to editors or to use on your own website and social media.

Future payoff: Editors pay attention to who's getting talked about, and clinics get people talking. If allowable, ask someone from your team to film snippets of the clinic for future use on social media. During the clinic, bring someone to do live coverage on Instagram Stories to tell all about the day, the participants, and what they learned. Use that video footage for future blogs and social media posts. ■



PHOTO BY JENNIFER PALUSON

COMMUNITY

GET INVOLVED

Use Your Community

GIVING BACK PUTS YOUR BUSINESS IN A POSITIVE LIGHT WHILE INTRODUCING YOU TO NEW POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS.

It takes time, and the immediate financial gain might be small, but giving back to your community is an excellent, often free way to introduce your training business to potential new customers. “Community” can mean many things. It can be your local area—think 4-H groups and youth riding clubs. But you also have a larger reining community that stretches around the world. Both offer opportunities to promote your business.

How to Serve

A service mindset attracts people to your business. If they see you giving back, they know you value the entire industry—not just your own business.

In your hometown. Your next customer could come from the grocery store, a PTA meeting, youth baseball practice, a poker fundraiser for a community service—really anywhere. Make time to become involved in your community to heighten the visibility of your business.

Your visibility is also heightened by people driving by and seeing your place—an overwhelming reason to keep your place in good repair, clean, and eye-appealing.

Additionally, check into local riding groups that might want you to give a group riding lesson or to speak at a club meeting about horse care or grooming. Offer to judge local open horse shows or county fairs. These activities position you as an authority and a reliable source of education and information.

In the reining community. It’s as simple as being involved. Volunteer for your affiliate’s committees and

boards. Help at your local NRHA-approved events. Learn more about the association’s governance, and then about what each NRHA committee does. See where your skillset and interests might best fit, and learn how to participate. Having a voice helps you personally and professionally.

Time to Ride

The American Horse Council started Time to Ride as a way to expose more non-horse people to horses and the equine community. The program has changed over the years, and now works to help training businesses promote themselves within their communities. Start by taking a look at the requirements to be a Time to Ride facility **here**. Determine where your business fits and identify any adjustments you might need to make to your facility to meet the criteria.

Fill out the application form by clicking the link at the bottom of that page. You can use your NRHA membership number where it asks for a membership/license number. A representative from Time to Ride will give you a call to go over the program and how your barn could fit in.

Depending on the level your business aligns with, you’ll receive marketing materials, required training (such as SafeSport), and other helpful guidance to promote your business as a Time to Ride facility.

Of note: Many professionals worry about the helmet requirement. That’s only for new riders who come to your barn through Time to Ride. Your current customers won’t be required to wear helmets. ■

RESOURCES



PLACES TO FIND HELP

You're Not Alone

TURN TO THESE RESOURCES FOR HELP IN YOUR MARKETING ENDEAVORS.

We know—this is a lot to take in, can feel completely overwhelming, and seems impossible. Don't let those feelings stop you in your tracks. There are lots of great outlets to help you find your way to marketing success online and in your quarterly *Pro Trainer* magazine. Focus on adapting. Learn from other small businesses, and then adapt them to yours. The horse industry has its own quirks, so the key is applying information in a way that makes sense for your business.

Social Media Examiner: You'll find downloadable guides galore on this robust website, if you're willing to share your email address. Regular posts keep you up-to-date on all aspects of social media marketing, from beginner to advanced. Follow them on Facebook, too, for regular live sessions and direct links to new content.

Social Media Today: A list of the top stories viewed by users keeps you on top of what's new and essential (e.g., image-sizes requirements and new offerings for each platform). It's pretty "newsy," but you can scroll through to find some gems to put to use in your efforts.

Convince and Convert: Stick with the blog on this site; the main site is used to sell services. The blog offers ideas

to develop your own content, including "101 Content Ideas to Add to Your Editorial Calendar."

HubSpot Marketing Blog: Find all sorts of free downloadable guides, including a template for a social media calendar that can help keep you on track.

The Social Media Hat: Social media articles are categorized in a drop-down menu by platform—so you won't waste your time searching through information about apps you don't use.

American Horse Publications: By joining this group as a business member, you have the opportunity to promote your business, learn from experts about marketing and social media, and get access to a robust list of members who can fulfill any need you have if you want to hire out your marketing efforts.

Work Your Own Network: Talk to people—other professionals, media you know, those who provide marketing services—to learn and find out what's best for your situation. Your network can tell you who they've had great results partnering with to do their marketing or where to go for advice. ■

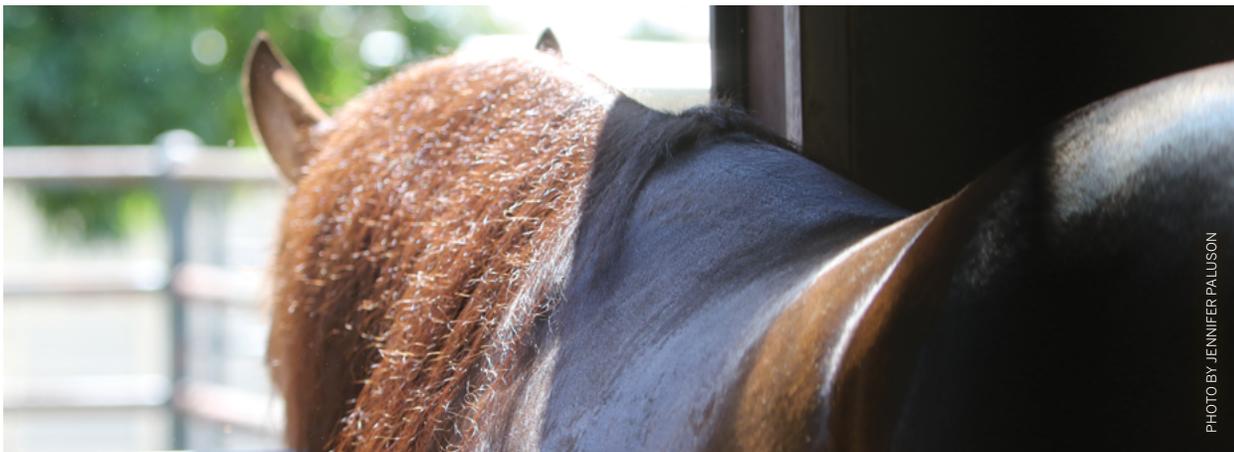


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NRHA PROFESSIONALS' CODE OF ETHICS



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 any way alter or modify the NRHA rules. ■