

NRHA PROFESSIONALS' MARKETING TOOLKIT



SECTION 2

YOUR WEBSITE

DEVELOP YOUR SITE

BRAINSTORM CONTENT

PROMOTE YOUR SITE

PHOTO BY JENNIFER PAULSON



WELCOME

ARM YOURSELF WITH KNOWLEDGE TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS

Your website is the one and only digital presence that's always present and completely represents you and your business. You own your site, unlike your social media accounts, so you have more control over it and how users interact with your business online. In this section of the NRHA Professionals' Marketing Toolkit, you'll get a better understanding of why you need a website, how to develop it, brainstorming content for your site, and how to promote it.

Section 1 of the toolkit covered your marketing strategy, which influences every aspect of your marketing plan, and Section 3 will help you on your journey with social media. 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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PHOTO BY JENNIFER PALUSON

WEBSITE

DEVELOP YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Yes, You Need a Website

YOU MIGHT THINK SOCIAL MEDIA WILL SUFFICE, BUT THINK AGAIN!

If you don't have a website, you need one.

If you have one and don't use it, you should.

If you don't want to do it, you need to hire someone.

If you don't believe this, here's a list of reasons why.

1. Social media isn't eternal.

Right now, it seems like Facebook and Instagram are the end all, be all marketing strategies—after all, they're free! That could all change in an instant. They could start charging for use. They could face regulation. (They've been investigated as monopolies.) That means your online presence could disappear, leaving you without any digital footprint or ways for customers to find you. You'd be starting from scratch.

2. People are looking for you.

It's estimated that Google handles more than five billion searches per day. If someone in your community becomes interested in reining after watching *Yellowstone* or seeing reining online, they're going to use a search engine, and you want them to find you and learn about your philosophies and what you offer. Or if someone who barrel races wants to learn more about reining and searches for "reining trainer near me," they can easily find you to try a lesson and see how you can help them.

3. Ownership matters.

You have control over everything you put on your website. It's unlikely your website will vanish overnight, assuming you use a reputable host.

4. It provides credibility.

Anyone can start a Facebook page. Putting the time and effort into building a website helps indicate that you're the real deal and are serious about your business. That sense of permanence enhances your credibility, which is especially key when dealing with high-dollar investments and young riders. It also gives you a spot to show who you

are, what you've accomplished, how you train horses and coach riders, etc., all in one place without the user having to scroll endlessly through Facebook posts.

5. Customers expect it.

When the CEO of a big company wants to look up more about you and your business, he or she expects to find a website. Same with the mom who's looking for riding lessons for her daughter. Those already in the reining business might know you and just check your Facebook page. But people looking to enter the sport expect a place to do their own research. Maybe your barn is full, so you're not looking for new customers. But you never know when the person looking might be your next major owner who buys horses for himself or herself and the children, as well as open aged-event horses for you to show. Put your best foot forward so these folks find you, research you, call you, and ultimately enlist you to buy horses and guide their passion for reining. ■



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A website with the bare minimum listed at left is a good start. If you want to make more a more robust site, think about adding these items.

- **Blog.** This is a terrific place to develop content you share on social media.
- **Calendar.** If you're dedicated to keeping this updated, this can be helpful for your clients and potential customers.
- **Client portal.** Online lesson booking and bill pay can make your business much easier to manage. You can also share arrangements for shows, scheduled veterinary and farrier visits to the farm, etc.
- **Social media links.** Allow visitors to easily find and follow you on social media by placing links to each of your platforms on every page. Some site designs allow for your social feeds to automatically populate on your site.

Content for Your Website

KEEP IT SIMPLE, BUT KEEP IT FRESH.

We've convinced you that you need a website. Now you're wondering, "What the heck am I going to put on a website?"

It's really pretty simple. Here are five basic categories your website needs, with a bonus sidebar if you're feeling particularly ambitious.

Section 1: Home Page

This is the place your user lands when they arrive at your site. Your design dictates what goes on this page. At the minimum, you'll want to present your navigation to every other page within your site, some sort of "welcome" to your site, and your contact information. Ideally, the ways to contact you will appear at the bottom of every page of your website.

Section 2: About

Sometimes this is found on your home page, depending on the layout of your site. Your "About" page should explain who you are, why you train reining horses and coach non pro and youth riders, and what you've accomplished. Draw from your mission statement for this content—maybe even placing it on the page. Whatever the case, be sure your user gets the chance to get to know you—including seeing some professional photos! Arena shots are good support images, but a nice headshot or family photo adds a level of familiarity and friendliness.

Whether or not you share about your family is up to you—that's determined by your comfort with that as well as the role your family plays in your business.

In addition to your story, tell those of your assistants and barn help—people your customers will see every time they come on your property. You can also give details about the service providers you rely on, if you feel that helps add to your credibility or further explains your why. Photos of these team members are also crucial so customers can recognize them on sight.

If you rent stalls from a facility, you could include a short introduction to the barn owner and their role in the horse industry.

Section 3: Services

This is another place the development of your mission statement is helpful. What do you offer? Why? How?

Something as simple as a bulleted list with what you do is better than nothing. A little more description goes a long way. Detail each facet of your business: training,

coaching, clinics, breeding, sales, fitting sale horses, etc. If you offer it, put it on the list. If you can share a little about your philosophy or technology used, for example, you give your visitor more information to work with to fully understand your business.

Section 4: Sponsors

Be sure to include space on your site for each of your sponsors. Keep it simple with a list of products/brands you endorse and links to their sites, or write a short sentence describing why you partner with that brand. If you can, include short write-ups or videos (perhaps that you created for social media) for your sponsors' products.

Be sure to keep this section up-to-date. If you part ways with a sponsor or gain one, you want to be sure to reflect your partnerships accurately.

Section 5: Media

Chances are, someone will consult you to share your expertise with the media—magazines, podcasts, etc. Or maybe there's a write-up about your barn in the local paper. Whatever the promotion is, it's your job to capitalize on it.

Post links to websites that offer content to which you contributed or are featured in. Share any and all positive promotion about your barn, your achievements, and even those of your customers. A potential new client might see an article about your non pro and be inspired to give you a call to see about lessons.

What to Avoid

Things to leave off your site come down to your time and ability to update it. Some pros list sale horses, but those can be so out of date that they push people away from working with you. If you're not going to update your show calendar, don't publish one. Basically, if you can't keep a page updated within reason, don't create it. Instead choose "evergreen" content that's relevant all the time. ■

Setting Up Your Website

LAUNCHING A WEBSITE CAN BE AS INVOLVED AS YOU WANT IT TO BE.

We've established why a website is critical to your business. If you already have a site, way to go! Now go update it!

If you're in need of a site for your business, there are a few routes you can take, depending on your resources—especially time and money.

Hiring it out requires finding a reliable designer who will collaborate with you on the level you prefer. Doing it in house can be fulfilling...and frustrating. There are benefits and drawbacks to both situations.

Hire It Out!

Big Benefit: This pathway puts the development of your site squarely in someone else's very capable hands. There are **quite a few experts** out there who can bid on this undertaking for you. Look around at sites you like, ask the owners who designed their site, and reach out to that person to see if they can help you. The biggest benefit of taking this route is it saves you time and anxiety.

You're Responsible For...: Just because you've hired someone out doesn't mean you're completely off the hook. You'll have to provide images, logos, basic copy, and feedback at every step of the way to ensure that the site accurately represents your brand and mission.

Costs: Most website development starts at \$1,500. The price goes up as you add more in-depth information. For example, if you manage a breeding program, you're looking at a larger investment. You'll also need to pay for your domain name (your website's name) and hosting fees. Those can both be purchased annually for under \$500.

Do It Yourself!

Big Benefit: You save the initial investment in the site, which can be major for your marketing budget. You also have complete control over how you're presented on the website without a lot of back and forth.

You're Responsible For...: Everything. You'll gather images and logos, write copy, and build the site. It sounds like a huge undertaking, and it is, but if you can invest the time,

it'll save you the sunk cost of hiring it out, leaving more in your marketing budget for other projects that can promote your business and leverage your new website.

Costs: DIY websites aren't free. Expect to pay either a monthly fee or an annual amount to host your website. Your domain name is usually under \$50 annually. Some hosting sites cover your first year's domain fee when you pay for an annual package (rather than month to month).

Resources

The most popular DIY website design platforms are Squarespace, Wix, and WordPress.

All of them offer a free trial period while you build your site. But be prepared for most of the trial period to be spent building your site and figuring out the lay of the land rather than it being a functioning website for users to visit. These providers also all offer templates, which means you don't have to worry about coding and learning about white space and other design elements.

No matter which platform you choose, be sure you own the rights to use photos and copy produced by other creatives that you place on the site, use high-res logos from your sponsors, and have someone else proofread the entire site before you go live. Spelling errors, typos, and design glitches can make potential customers move on.

Here's a breakdown of those three platforms and links to learn more about them.

Squarespace: Known for its creative designs, Squarespace offers plans starting around \$15 per month with a discount for purchasing an annual plan. You can choose from a variety of themes that are broken down by category—you might find that the Professional Services or Local Business category best meets your needs. It takes some vision to be able to place your own business in their templates.

Once you choose a theme, you'll need to play with the formats to get your site exactly how you want it. You don't have to use the template exactly as it appears on each page. You can alter it by clicking the "plus" symbol, which takes you to a variety of layouts. Be sure to delete any preset elements from the page that you don't want to use. →

WEBSITE

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Helpful Articles From the Pros

[How to Create a Business Website in Simple Steps, MBO Partners](#)

[Wix Vs. Squarespace Vs. WordPress: A Fair Contest? Website Builder Expert](#)

Wix: Touted one of the easiest builders available, Wix uses a drag-and-drop design to keep things simple. It even offers an “Artificial Design Intelligence” option that basically puts the site together for you in just a few minutes, which can be a big help when you’re short on time. But you’ll need to do some finessing to get your site exactly the way you want it to appear and function.

Don’t be fooled by its claim of being “free for everyone.” You’ll want to upgrade to the premium plan so you’ll have your own domain name, can remove Wix ads, etc. If you go with the Pro Premium level, they’ll provide help designing

your logo and add in an events calendar, which can be helpful for your users.

WordPress: It’s very popular, but WordPress is also the trickiest to use. It requires some coding knowledge, and you’ll need to find your own website host.

That said, you’re not completely alone in WordPress Land. There are many of themes to choose from, and you can customize and add plug-ins as you’d like. With coding, you can make any theme your own, so the options are practically limitless. ■



Website Development Tips

1. Plan your content buckets to setup your framework.
2. Use a platform that’s mobile-friendly. Most people will look at your site from their phones rather than a desktop computer.
3. Gather images—be sure you own the rights to use them and that they’re the correct size/resolution!
4. Make a strong first impression by strategizing what your visitor will see first when they go to your site.
5. Eliminate clutter—keep it simple.
6. Be sure it’s readable—this includes type size and color.
7. Link to your social media accounts.
8. Develop branding with consistent colors, fonts, and type treatments.
9. Evaluate if your navigation makes sense.
10. Ask someone else to go through your site to check for error messages, typos, and mistakes.

Blog and Social Media Thought-Starters

RUNNING LOW ON IDEAS FOR YOUR POSTS? START HERE.

Coming up with enough content to support a website and social media feeds is hard enough when it's your full-time job, let alone when you already have a full-time job training and caring for horses, giving lessons, and running other aspects of your business.

Here are thought-starters for different platforms that most NRHA Professionals use. Implement them when you're low on inspiration and use them as springboards for our own ideas.

Text/Image Posts

Sharing a post from a sponsor or brand you use/believe in is great. But it's even better to create your own posts and content. When you do, think about things that solicit engagement—that is, likes, comments, and shares. Posts with photos will generally perform better than text-only posts; posts with video tend to perform even better. Ideally, you'll create a variety of posts—those that end on Facebook and those that link to your or another website, videos and text-only, shared posts and original content. Here are ideas for that kind of content.

- Show results
- Advice and favorite quotes—preferably created into a meme that people can share
- News—be sure to cite a reliable source
- Articles—those you contribute to for magazines, digital resources, etc.
- Podcasts—those you listen to and contribute to
- Livestreams and draws—share links and post when your horses will compete
- Holidays—both traditional bank calendar holidays and those that are specific to the horse industry, e.g., National Farriers' Week is the second week of July, National Day of the Cowboy is the fourth Saturday in July, and National Day of the Horse is December 13
- Any content from your website

Videos

Length isn't essential for social media videos. Instagram Stories videos can be especially low-effort because they disappear after 24 hours unless you choose to save them. Videos in your Instagram grid (main feed) stay there

forever (unless you delete them), so should have a more professional approach but can be short. Facebook videos tend to be a little longer, require more editing, and need more thought but the rewards in terms of reach are worth it. Try some of these video ideas.

- Barn tour
- Tack-room tour
- Finer points of your arena
- Tips, tricks, and hacks
- Storage
- Feed prep
- Farrier shoeing a horse
- Body-work specialist working on a horse
- Mane being banded
- Training tips
- Interviews with your team and customers

Blogs

The beauty of a blog post is it can be as long or short as you need it to be. Have a quick tip for keeping a horse's tail from getting caught in a stop? Write a quick 1-2-3 step process. Want to share insights about a more in-depth topic? Write as many paragraphs as you want. The extra bonus is your images don't have to be of high resolution.

- Seasonal health tips
 - Vaccinations
 - Fly prevention
 - Biosecurity at shows
 - Fall viruses
- Goal-setting ideas
- Share your own goals
- Detail your show schedule and how you pick where you'll go
- Who do you look up to/admire?
- Show results
- Hauling tips
- Preparing for a first show or a big show
- Packing your trailer
- Past mentors
- Major events
 - Which horses are being shown by whom
 - Stories about those horses and riders
 - Past wins ■

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-size 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. ■

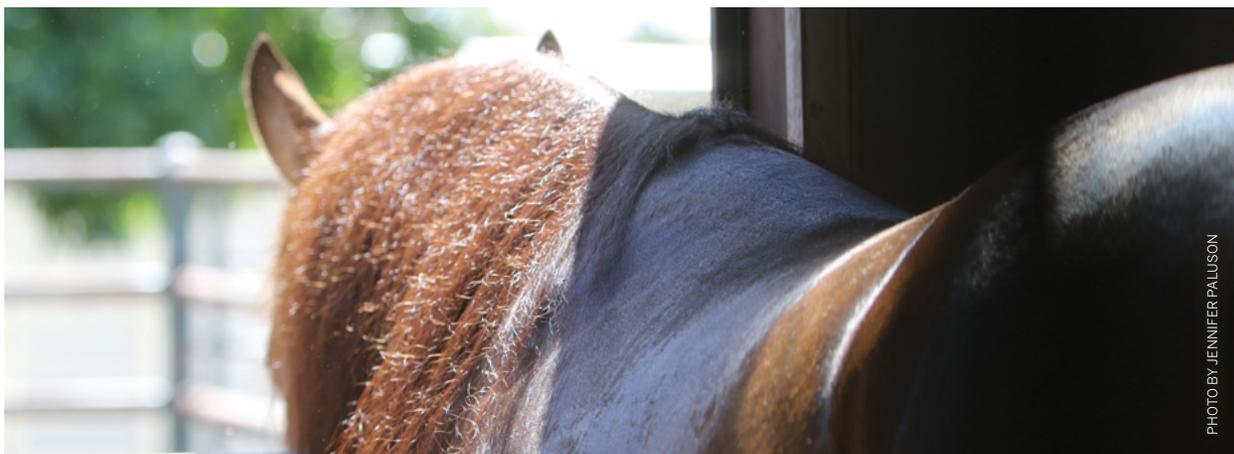


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NRHA PROFESSIONALS' CODE OF ETHICS



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.



PHOTO BY AEGAIL BOATWRIGHT

- 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. ■