

Put On Your Best Face

Facebook can provide marketing tools to help you make the most of your customer relationships.

by **Christy Couch Lee** and **Julie White**

Who would have guessed a social networking Web site founded a few short years ago could grow to become a powerful marketing tool for businesses?

Founded in February 2004, Facebook now boasts more than 400 million active users, according to the Facebook information page.

Chances are you are one of those millions who rely on the site to stay connected with friends and stay abreast of the latest events and trends.



Lowell Moser, a 75-year-old cattle producer and Facebook user from Effingham, Kan., certainly is.

"I get on Facebook just to see what other people have to say," Moser says.

Moser had been corresponding with Mark Largent, Kaycee, Wyo., through e-mail after purchasing a heifer. Largent invited Moser to use Facebook, and he has been a user ever since.

Sure, those who utilize the site likely place value on the networking it provides. However, have you

considered the marketing power it holds?

"Facebook is a great way to market cattle," says Erick Schmidt, Gonzales, Texas. Schmidt, owner of the Web design company ES Design Group, also owns and operates Schmidt Cattle Co. along with his parents, Keith and Sara, and brother, Travis. The Schmidts, for the past year, have used Facebook, in addition to Twitter and a Web site, to publicize their business. "Facebook is quick and easy, and easy for everyone to look through."

Hereford producers can utilize features such as creating events, groups or fan pages to create interest and entice customers. And, in the world of marketing, staying at the top of customers' minds is the name of the game.

It's all for the fans

Schmidt says ranches can best utilize Facebook by creating a page for the operation. Customers and potential customers can "like" your page, thus connecting your operation to those interested in your offering.

How to get started: Creating a personal profile

- Visit www.facebook.com
- Under the heading "Sign Up," provide required information, including first and last names, e-mail address, gender, birth date and password. Then click the green box, "Sign Up."
- Under the heading "Step 1: Add Friends," choose friends to add based on the suggestions provided.
- Under the heading "Step 2: Find Friends," enter your e-mail address and password to locate friends in your e-mail contacts who may also be on Facebook. Choose friends to add based on the suggestions provided.
- Under the heading "Step 3: Profile Information," complete education and employer information for your profile page.
- Under the heading "Step 4: Profile Picture," upload a photo from your computer, or use your Web cam to take a photo of yourself for use as your profile photo. Click the "Save and continue" button.
- You will be taken to your home page, where all status updates from your friends will appear under the "News Feed" heading.
- To create a status update, type your information in the "What's on your mind?" box, and click the "Update" button.
- Under the "Suggestions" heading on the right side of the home page, you will see the names of people with whom you share mutual friends. To add a suggestion as a friend, click "Add as friend" and follow instructions.
- To view your profile, click "Profile" in the top, blue bar on the page.
- To upload photo albums, update biography and profile information, or view your "Wall," where friends may leave messages and your activity is recorded, click on the appropriate tab at the top of your profile page.
- To view a friend's profile page, search for his/her name in the search box at the top of your home page. Select the appropriate name from the list. Once on the friend's page, you may write on his/her wall or send a private message by clicking "Send [Friend Name] a Message" under the profile photo. **HW**

Until recently these were called fan pages.

By creating a Facebook page, a member is able to post photos and videos, create events, and update those who “like” their page about the latest news and events. In addition, Facebook pages allow the option to create advertisements that appear on a member’s home page.

“We use our Facebook page for everything — it’s basically our Web site on Facebook,” Schmidt says.

Some producers create personal profiles for their farm or ranch, rather than a page. Schmidt recommends all farms or ranches establish pages because of the extra features available.

“If you’re going to set up an account for your cattle company, you need to have a page,” he says. “If (you) set up the account as an individual, it won’t have the same look and options. With pages, it’s easy to attract the friends you already have on Facebook, and it’s easy to inform your fans of upcoming sales and helpful links.”

In addition, Schmidt says, your farm or ranch can quickly attract new users who “like” your page. When a person “likes” your page, a notice is posted in their friends’ “news feed.” Sometimes, Schmidt says, a friend will check out the page and “like” it — even if the initial invitation wasn’t sent to that person.

To maintain users’ interest, Schmidt says, it’s important to update your page often.

“We update most often during show season,” he says. “But, when we’re not showing, we’re putting something up about what has recently calved and when cattle are available for viewing.”

Posting photos and videos on your page can also begin discussions amongst your visitors, Schmidt says.

“The pages make it easy for customers to search through and view cattle photos,” he says. “Visitors can leave comments on photos, as well. It’s



“Facebook is a great way to market cattle.”

— Erick Schmidt



a great way for them to network. One comment can get other comments going. It gets conversations started.”

Another beneficial feature of Facebook is the “event” tool, which allows customers to stay up-to-date with the events of your operation.

The big event

With the Facebook event tool, the coordinator can provide event details, links, videos and photos and facilitate discussions. In addition, the coordinator can invite others to attend, monitor RSVPs and send updates to attendees.

“I created a Facebook event for our Shades of Red and White sale held last fall,” says Audrey Hambricht of Kanza Cattle, Chapman, Kan. “My intentions with the ‘invite’ was to gain interest and spread awareness,

like advertising. Facebook is the biggest social-networking tool out there, and almost everyone has it, so it really is a good way to get the word out. We had a few people inquire about the sale because of it.”

Know your limitations

Although Facebook provides many advantages, it should not be your sole marketing tool, Schmidt says.

“Facebook is somewhat limited,” he says. “It’s difficult to show a donor cow with full details of show success and daughters on one page.”

For this reason, Schmidt says, every operation should have a Web site to which customers can turn for more detailed information.

In addition, he says, a Web site is critical to reach a more expansive audience.

“You’re not likely to get the commercial or older viewers who don’t have a Facebook account without a Web site,” Schmidt says. “The majority of (cattle) people on Facebook are mainly involved in the show cattle industry. Establish a Web site first. Then, spread out to Facebook and Twitter.”

Although Facebook isn’t a miracle marketing tool, it can provide many advantages for producers hoping to reach even more customers. By creating a Facebook page for your operation, you just may put your best face forward in the marketing world. **HW**

How to get started: Creating a page

- First, you must establish a personal profile. To do so, follow the instructions in “How to get started: Creating a personal profile.”
- From your home page, click “Ads and Pages” in the left navigational bar.
- On the “Advertising” page, click “Pages” in the top navigational bar.
- On the “Facebook Pages” page, you will find tabs providing the following options: “Overview,” “Prepare,” “Step by Step” and “Find New Fans.”
- Once you have reviewed this information, click the green “Create a Page” button at the top of the “Facebook Pages” page.
- Follow the instructions to set up your Facebook page. **HW**