

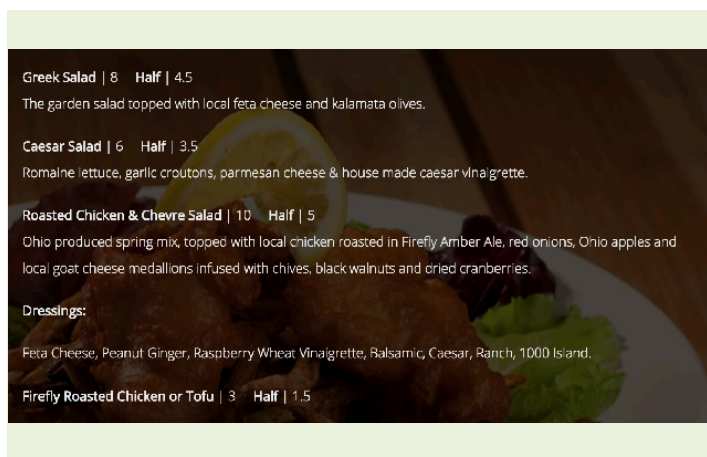
BUILDING A BRAND FOR SPECIALTY DAIRY

AFFORDABLE MARKETING TOOL: SOCIAL MEDIA

November 7, 2018

FREE MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Social media can be a cost free method to market your meat products, your farm or your retail business. If you are selling in direct or wholesale markets it is also an extremely effective way to connect directly with customers and buyers. Promoting your brand also gives you endless opportunities to market your partners: retailers, distributors, farm stands, food hubs, and farmers market, to name just a few possible collaborators.



Above is an example of Jackie O's collaborating with the local farm, Integration Acres, to source their local goat cheese for their salads.

POTENTIAL TO REACH MORE PEOPLE

Around the world, every 60 seconds, Facebook generates four million likes; Instagram users upload 48,000 photos and 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube. Social media sites can reach the most people with the least money. Users of social media willingly and frequently visit these sites to get updates. Sparking their interest can result in increased visibility for your cause. Also, a social media post can sometimes hold more credibility than a direct commercial advertisement.

What if my page doesn't have many "followers" or "likes"? This is a good opportunity to use your fellow producers and your current client base. Cross promotion of products in the forms of "likes" or "shares" through social media sites let your current customer base, or "fans", vouch for you to their network and/or customer base.

For example, to the right is a post from the Butcher & Grocer, a local foods store in Columbus, Ohio. The Keller Market House does a fantastic job of promoting the local dairy and brands they carry in their store by featuring them on Facebook, sometimes taking the opportunity to pair it with other brands that complement one another. By tagging Ruffwing Farms, it increases their brand visibility by however many followers the Keller Market house has on their profile.

INCREASED BRAND AWARENESS

With regular posting and user sharing capabilities, social media can help to spread your brand and get our message out. While most consumers know what animal beef or pork comes from, they have no concept of the production process. This is the primary format by which you can tell your brand story.

COMMUNICATION WITH AN AUDIENCE

Social media can be a great way for interested people to get into contact with you to ask questions, to propose and share ideas, and to become locavore champions of your brand. You can also use it to reach out to players in your community. Social media can also be used to communicate special offerings and generate excitement over the limited quantity. To the right you can see an example of Ruffwing Farms communicating to their fans how

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TAKE QUALITY PICTURES

A post with pictures will grab much more attention than a text post. Remember to take quality photos at events or at any point in the production process.

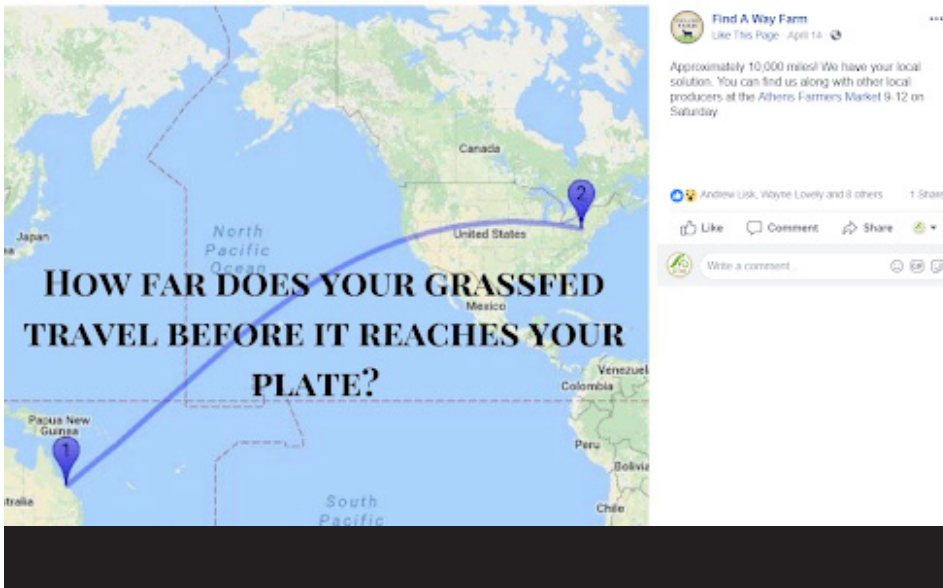
A blurry, pixelated, badly lit, or distracting photo will take away from the professionalism and credibility of your post. Quality imagery is important when promoting one choice over another. See the photography toolkit for more information on photography.

UTILIZE VIDEOS

One newer trend in 2018 social media is the prevalence of videos. Videos should be roughly 30-45 seconds in length and should be used to show an encounter at some point in your production process. Whether it is moving the livestock to new pasture, feeding time, how equipment or tools you use in production, or even just a short video of mixing ingredients or goats coming in from the pasture will catch the eye of your customers. You only get about two seconds of your viewers time before they will decide whether to continue watching or to scroll past.

MIX THE PERSONAL WITH THE PROMOTIONAL

Behind-the-scenes insights into your participants' businesses will add a fun and relatable tone. Pictures of piglets or calves in the field, or the sunset on the farm, offer a chance to authentically



to identify them at the Farmers Market.

LEVEL WITH COMPETITION

Big businesses and chain restaurants are using social media to promote their food. Especially when many of our participants are small business who may not have the resources to keep up with their own sites, using social media to promote local food is a great way to compete with the alternatives. You may be uncomfortable about sharing about your brand at first, but as a small business owner competing with big business, you should see yourself as a champion for your brand, ensuring that it receives the praise, awareness and customer base that it deserves.

POST REGULARLY

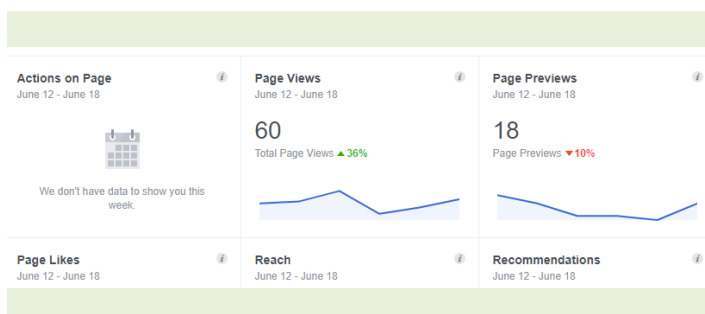
There is no set formula of how many times to post. People want to be engaged, but they do not like to be overwhelmed. An abandoned or underused social media site can detract from professionalism and credibility. Try to post at least once per week. Posting 1 to 3 times a day is great, but any more posts than that is not recommended.

Remember you need to keep your posts short and always attach a photo or visual to make the post more eye catching. It is recommended to keep posts under 200 words. You may find that some social media sites like Twitter and Instagram have character limits for posts.

connect with your consumers, many of whom may have never experienced the day to day operations required to create high quality livestock products. People are more likely to patronize a business when they feel a connection to the brand.

BE AWARE OF TIMING

Think about when people are most likely to log into social media sites. Some people check in first thing in the morning, during lunch time, towards the end of the work day, or when they get home from work. These are the best times to post as they will reach the most viewers.

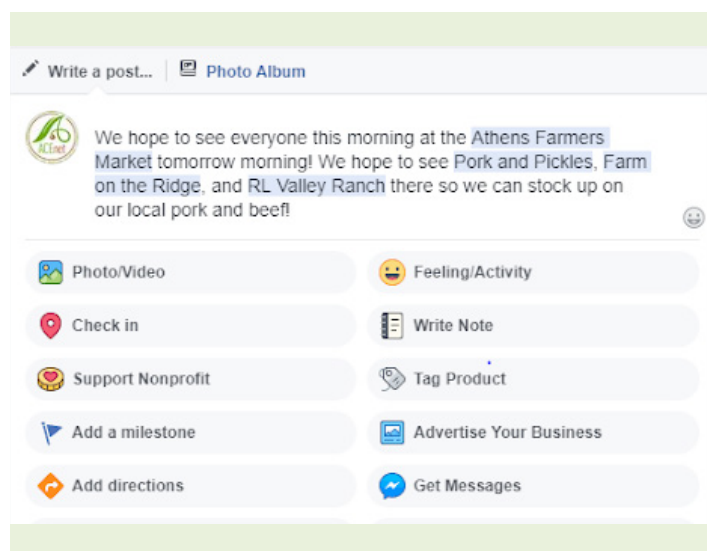


VARY YOUR POSTING HABITS

Try posting on different days of the week at different times to reach members of your audience with different schedules. Sites like Facebook and Instagram offer information on post “views” or “likes” free of charge to businesses currently. Evaluate which posts have been the most successful and change your posting habits accordingly. Sites like Facebook and Instagram provide post metrics at no cost to business platforms and can help determine when you should post in order to have the greatest impression on your followers.

SCHEDULE POSTS IN ADVANCE

There is technology available to schedule posts hours or days before you want them to go live. Facebook has its own built in feature and there are also apps to do the same thing on other platforms, such as the app Hootsuite. If you have a busy schedule, this can help you to utilize your slowest days to your advantage. In this sample Facebook post, you see an example of scheduling the post to come out on a Saturday morning, when normally no one would be on the ACEnet social media. The blue highlighted producer names indicate that they have been “tagged” in the post and will be notified at the scheduled time.



USE HASHTAGS WHEN APPROPRIATE

A hashtag is a pound sign followed by a word or phrase. It signals that a post is related to the topic identified in the hashtag. The hashtag allows social media sites to categorize posts and generate a list of all posts that have used the same hashtag.

Reliably using and promoting your brand hashtag will allow all of the social media posts that contain it to be organized into one feed when the hashtag is clicked on. You can also use other food related hashtags to try to gain visibility from people surfing through popular hashtags. Some popular hashtags for the local food movement include: **#localfood** **#locavore** **#slowfood** **#ecofoodie** **#foodie** **#profood**.

Check your local area and events to find out if there is a local hashtag that you can incorporate to reach local audiences. A quick social media search can let you know how many times the hashtag has been used and what others are using it for.

TAG AND INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS AND SUPPORTERS

Your local specialty dairy brand has a great support system. Even a start-up operation has fans and loyal customers. Tagging retail stores, restaurant customers, Farmers Markets, and encouraging customers to “tag” you in return will help with two things. First, it will increase the likelihood that more people will see your post. Some users might be following an organization, project or business that you tagged in a post, and they will indirectly view your post as a result, which increases the chances that they will click on your page, see your other posts, and get involved.

Second, it will increase the responses that you get on your posts. When you tag participants and partners, you are appealing to people who you already know who care about local meat, local farms and the local food economy. They will hopefully like or comment on your post. On some social media sites, posts with the most interaction are shown first to users scrolling through the feed.

INTERACT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Frame your posts so that they invite interaction from your followers. Ask them questions or invite them to participate in concrete ways. Respond to comments in a positive way and respond to messages in a timely manner. Follow people or projects in your community and pay attention when they post about your meat products, your farm or your retail business.

Remember that on social media your business will be in the same space as your customers’ friends. Your posts are competing with those personal networks. Instead of only promoting your business, use your page to build a community. People genuinely enjoy learning about the day to day stories and interests of your business rather than advertising. Neighborly approaches make businesses more familiar to potential customers and create positive feelings about your brand.

