

The Internet as a Communications Tool



Communication is Key



“I’ll pay more for a man’s ability to express himself than for any other quality he might possess.”

-- Charles Schwab

Communication is Key



Successful communication requires that you consider:

1. The message you wish to convey,
2. Your reason for communicating,
3. Your intended audience, and
4. How you will receive feedback.

Communication is Key



Remember!

Communication requires sending
and receiving messages

What we'll cover



- Reasons for business communication
- Internet-based communication tools

Question...



Why do businesses need to
communicate?

Question...



Why do
businesses need
to
communicate?

Sales &
Marketing

Customer
Service

Public
Relations

Networking

Internal Management

Sales & Marketing



- No sales ... No profits!
- Listening to customers is as important as promotion
- Should be receiving information to assess:
 - Market news and outlets
 - Competitors' products and prices
 - Customer needs
 - Ways to improve marketing efforts

Sales & Marketing



- Your customers need to know about:
 - Product quality, sizes, prices, delivery schedule, other options...
- Customers must be led through an on-line purchase experience

Customer Service



- Happy customers are more likely to return
- Sometimes, customers have problems or questions about an item
- Communicate to understand and address the issue

Public Relations



- PR messages go to customers and non-customers
- Possible PR information
 - Contact information & hours of operation
 - Mission statement
 - Photos
 - Business history
 - Educational items

Professional Networking



- Your network allows you to share and gather information
- It may include people from anywhere in the world.
- It should include:
 - Other farmers
 - Professionals (accountant, lawyer...)

Internal Management



- Working closely with partners or employees requires constant communication
 - Work performance, changes in production methods, budget information, scheduling, employee relations
- Good communication leads to a comfortable work environment and contented employees

Brief Review



Five Reasons for Business Communication

1. Sales & Marketing
2. Customer Service
3. Public Relations
4. Professional Networking
5. Internal Management

Question...



How many internet-based communication tools can you name?

Electronic Communication Tools



- Website Text & Blogs
- Email
- List Managers
- Multimedia
- Discussion Groups
- Chats/Instant Messaging

Electronic Communication Tools



Very important...

- Often, face-to-face or phone conversations are best!
- Handwritten notes are also greatly appreciated by many
- Internet tools provide many other options

Electronic Communication Tools



General Netiquette Basics

1. Be considerate
2. Indicate how you obtained the contact
3. Indicate the reason for communicating
4. Use proper grammar
5. Be brief yet complete
6. Avoid smileys ;-)

Website Text & Blogs



Websites are very commonly used tool

- Design is critical – Are your visitors receiving what you intend to convey?
- Photos and graphics may help convey your message
- Use as few words as possible

Website Text & Blogs



The information you may need to include depends upon your message.

Consider a fruit grower who processes and sells jams & jellies – What might the consumer want to know?

Website Text & Blogs



- Blog (web log) - A **blog** is a user generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order.
- Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic.

Source: Wikipedia

Website Text & Blogs



Some blogs invite comments

- Is this right for you?
- Can you filter responses before they become public?
- Your website may be your only chance to make a first impression!

Website Text & Blogs



[« More birds in the yard | Main | Missing: one very small turkey »](#)

November 20, 2006

First Snow



Sure, we have had plenty of snow in the air this fall, but today we had our first snow on the ground. And on the rhodos, as pictured here. But Thanksgiving Day is predicted to be sunny and

55 degrees. Gotta love upstate NY!

Posted by roosterh at November 20, 2006 06:50 AM  Technorati

An example blog entry from Rooster Hill Farm

What are your impressions?

Source: www.roosterhillfarm.com

Email



- Emails are like “snail mail.”
- They can be sent and received very quickly.
- Offered by most internet service providers
- Example address: janedoe@example.com

Email



- There are many free services
- Should follow netiquette rules
- Maybe include a “signature”

List Managers



- A list serves as a proxy for many email addresses; can send to the list name
- Avoid spam!
- Allow users to opt in and opt out

List Managers



Handling replies may be an issue

- Allow no replies
- Reply only to sender
- Reply to entire list
- Choose to reply to send or to list

Multimedia



- Audio or video can liven up a website
 - Video tour of farm
 - Recipe ideas
 - A welcome message
- These may be hard on dial-ups
- Some applications require special software or hardware
- Webcams may be useful

A Webcam Example



www.PhilRoberson.com

Welcome to Heald Street Farm's webcam page.

We now have two webcams at Heald Street Farm. Click on either image for a larger, streaming image.



This is our barn webcam showing the view of the horse's turn-out area, the back pastures, and part of the riding ring.



Our front porch webcam shows our porch, driveway, herb garden and the large pasture.

The webcams at Heald Street Farm allow users to feel connected by seeing what's going on at the farm.

Discussion Groups



- Allow for “asynchronous communication”
 - A user posts a comment or question
 - Another posts a response at any time
 - Can go back and forth
- Maybe not appropriate for your farm business
- Good way to learn and interact with others

Chats & Instant Messaging



- Chatting is synchronous communication
- Two forms of chatting
 - Chat rooms
 - Instant messaging

Chats & Instant Messaging



Chat Rooms

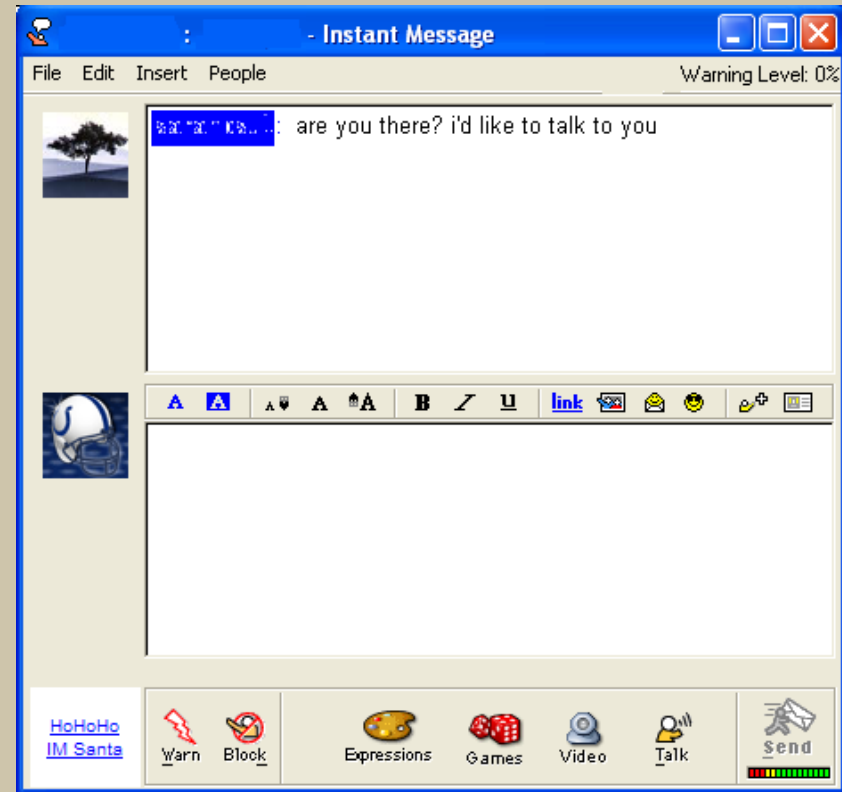
- Typically theme-focused
- Individuals may be anonymous
- May need to download special software

Chats & Instant Messaging



Instant Messaging

- Allows one to send notes that immediately pop up on the recipient's screen
- Typically used to interact with one other person
- May be very useful for internal communication



Example shows AOL's Instant Messenger (AIM)

Chats & Instant Messaging



Instant Messaging

- Services available include AIM, MSN, Yahoo, icq, Google Talk, etc.
- Some allow use of microphone or webcam to communicate
- Files can be shared via most software; important security issues with this.
- Some allow users to connect via cell phone

Section Wrap-Up



- Good communication is vital to business success
- Becoming a good communicator takes time and practice.
- Internet tools are simply new ways to communicate. Which will work for you?