Whether you're selling raw or value-added farm products, breeding stock, agritourism experiences, or business services, the start of a new year is a good time to develop your digital marketing “action tools”. There’s lots of buzz words or phrases surrounding direct marketing activities, but let’s focus on just four suggestions to improve your marketing results in 2016. Remember that these suggestions still need to be viewed through the filter of your own farm business.

**Mobile Accessibility and Optimization**

If you have a business, then you should be utilizing multiple web tools- a website, social media, and an email outreach. The purpose of your website is to connect with your customers, tell your story, and sell stuff. More and more people are using their smartphones and tablets to search for products, compare prices, learn more about the producer, and most importantly-make a purchase. Our farm uses an email newsletter service that tracks our open rates and the type of devices used by our customers to open our emails to them. Over 53% of our farm’s marketing emails are now viewed on a mobile device.

In 2016, mobile marketing is predicted to surpass $100 billion in spending and account for more than 50% of all digital spending for the first time, according to eMarketer. Be sure that your website and email template are optimized for reading on all mobile devices.

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Keep Your Website and Social Presence Current

Direct marketers must keep their websites up to date since it represents your brand. Web content can include videos, infographics, and lots of pictures and illustrations to give customers the right motivation to support your brand. Social media tools can reflect website content and vis-a-versa so both can be updated at the same time. It’s best to use social media as a way to engage users and build brand trust, not for self-promotion.

Prioritize Your Email Marketing

Make sure you have a viable email list and work at growing your contact numbers. Ask customers to sign-up for your newsletter and ask permission to add possible contacts to your list from other email correspondence. But, don’t be tempted to purchase email lists. People don’t like unsolicited email marketing pitches and often mark these for their spam box. Work to:

a. Grow the size of your email list.

b. Use and automated service such as Mail chimp or Constant Contact to produce professional looking marketing emails and manage your email list.

c. Keep in mind that regardless of the email content, customer retention should be a goal in all your email marketing.

Content Matters

Make sure the content of all your marketing material provides meaningful information to current and potential customers. Good content helps build awareness and trust in your brand. Content marketing works best when it aims at helping the customer solve a problem or need.

According to a Content Marketing Institute survey, 58% of consumers consider companies that produce video content to be more trust worthy. Your smartphone is equipped with a camera that records video and can be uploaded to sites such as You Tube and Vimeo. These video clips can then be embedded in your website. Today’s consumers are looking for more visual content and want instant forms of communications rather than lots of text.