

Marketing Your Club, Center or Region

Saturday, January 21, 2023 ~ 1pm – 2pm ~ Landmark 3

- 1) Determine your budget. You don't need a lot but you should allocate some money, especially in the beginning of your "campaign."
- 2) Apply for grants and/or find sponsors in your area. In Virginia, we have the Virginia Horse Industry Board (the organization that collects \$1 from every coggins). They offer grants to Virginia Equine 501(c)(3) organizations that promote horses in the state. Google offers grants for 501(c)(3) organizations to put up Google search results ads. We have also received sponsorships in the past for specific programs and initiatives from some equine businesses that support our mission.
- 3) Find some print & digital publications to get your brand out there. Some publications will sell you an annual package of full-page ad space in each issue and then let you submit articles whenever you want. I've written a number of articles for a free publication in my region. Make sure digital publications and ads all link to your website or Facebook page or wherever you can market yourself.
- 4) Find someone in your club, center or region who can write well. Ask them to write articles for you that introduce non-horsey adults to the benefits of Pony Club. These are the articles you can submit to print & digital publications identified above. [Note, you're welcomed to any of my articles if you want to recirculate, <https://vrponyclub.org/news>, just email me at dawnb@ponyclub.org and I'll send you the MS Word version.]
- 5) Set a date in the future (4-5 months away is ideal) for an Open House or other fun activity to invite the public. The best ones are during some PC activity you're already doing like a rally or certification.
- 6) Start a list of influential professionals in your area who might be helpful to you when you're ready to promote. Use a spreadsheet for their name, phone, email & physical address so that you can print labels and copy email addresses into your mail client.
- 7) Make good use of social media. Ideally your upper level members or leaders can be convinced to take pictures and guest post during rallies, lessons, etc. Make a list of people you can approach to post for you. In general, don't create new social channels if you're not able to maintain and monitor them. [Note: Make sure you have all members' permission to post photos, including parents of minor children!]
- 8) Create fun social media posts yourself whenever you are getting ready for a rally, lesson, fundraiser, etc. Use www.canva.com. It's free, easy and fun! Post weekly starting a few weeks before the event and then daily for the last few days beforehand. During the event, get a guest poster or post photos yourself. [Note: Only tag members with their permission or their parent's permission if they are minors.]
- 9) Do you have a form on your club, center or region website for potential members to fill out? If not, create one today and assign one person to be responsible for following up with each lead. Make sure you have a system in place for that follow up.
 - Step 1: outreach by phone by Membership Coordinator or DC/CA/RS;
 - Step 2: invitation to attend a lesson, ground school, rally, etc;
 - Step 3: give visitors a take home packet with info/brochures/contact info, etc;
 - Step 4: follow up phone call by an upper level member or person from step 1 to answer questions; offer to help them fill out paperwork, etc; and
 - Step 5: make sure they feel welcomed and oriented right away when they join.

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10) Does your website have everything on it that your members need? Your calendar may be the most important thing on your website. Make sure it's up to date! [Note: some of you may use other software to keep your membership updated. That's fine but remember that the general public can't see that. So, you need to make sure you're very clear on your website that you are an active, vibrant, going-places club, center or region.]

11) Do you have a glossy brochure that spells out the advantages of your club, center or region? If not, make one. Use a template to create it and www.vistaprint.com to print 1000. Check for coupon codes on www.retailmenot.com or wait for a sale! They aren't expensive and you can reorder them as needed. Here's an example of two I made: <https://vrponyclub.org/resources/Documents/VRPC%20Brochure.compressed.pdf> and <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xCPD-j56S9Ov2vh3QT5HFW0GPZCYxve/view> Here are a few other resources that are free or inexpensive to help you with all of your marketing needs: <https://wave.video/>, <https://unsplash.com/>, <https://creativemarket.com/>.

12) Make sure you follow good Pony Club etiquette when marketing our brand:

- Don't use photos of members doing anything non-PC (hard hats, footwear, proper leading, etc).
- Don't use your member's full name (use Susie, a C-1 from Happy Valley Pony Club, etc).
- Use the official USPC logos, your region and/or club/center logos on everything.
- Don't use acronyms, slang or code that non-PC people won't get (and no Pony Clubbers, please).

13) Deploy your army! You have a ready-made army of cuteness (your members). Ask them to pass out brochures at the local shows, wear their Pony Club attire, saddle pads, and pin whenever they go to horsey events. Ask the parents to spread the good word of Pony Club at their church, girl/boy scout meetings, schools, etc. Leave your old Discover magazines at the dentist's or pediatrician's office. Make sure your membership knows you're in the market for new members all the time.

14) Stay organized. <https://business.facebook.com/> - the Meta Business Suite (Facebook and Instagram only); <https://hootsuite.com/> - analytics, compiles all social media in one dashboard (free plan only allows for 2 social media accounts and up to 5 scheduled posts); and, <https://airtable.com/> - cloud based spreadsheet on steroids with great templates for planning.

15) Ask for help! You're not alone. Check out the resources that already exist on the USPC website: <https://www.ponyclub.org/Volunteers/Resources/PromotePonyClub.aspx> If you have questions, post them to the DC/CA/RS Digest. Chances are very good that someone else around the country has dealt with the same issue. And, the national office has a Marketing staff that are an excellent resource for you.

16) Keep learning! There are some wonderful free blogs, webinars and guides to learn all sorts of marketing (and anything else you want to learn) tips and tricks. Just google to find them. Check out the following ones I use frequently: <https://www.wildapricot.com/academy>, <https://www.nonprofitready.org/>, <https://www.techsoup.org/>, <https://www.charityhowto.com/>, <https://jcsocialmarketing.com/>, and <https://www.idealware.org/>.