

ONLINE MARKETING FOR AGRITOURISM BUSINESSES: WEBSITE

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Why have a website?

More and more people are looking to get information online. Your website is an opportunity to promote your business widely, and a place customers can go to get some of their basic questions answered before coming to your farm. A business website can include information about your products and services, hours of operation, crop availability, what to expect upon arrival, and other details that help communicate your brand. This can help you build your customer base and save you from answering a lot of questions on the phone over and over.

Domain name

Your domain name is the URL (website address) which people type in to get to your website. Usually, you want your domain name to be as close to your business name as possible. Domain names must be unique, so wherever you purchase your domain will check to make sure it is not already in use. If it is, you may have to change yours slightly. There are many different websites where you can buy and register your domain name, including Domain.com or Bluehost.com. If you are using a website builder such as SquareSpace, WordPress or Wix, you can register and renew your domain name from there and do not have to use an additional site.

*Note: some website builders and hosts offer a free domain name with their free website. However, it usually has that companies name in the URL and can make the address longer. For example, if a farm was using the platform Weebly and wanted a free site, the URL would look like: www.farmname.weebly.com



Photo: Audrey Comerford, OSU Extension Agritourism

Deciding on a platform

In choosing a web hosting service and website builder you should take a number of factors into account including: pricing, ease of use, support, customization, and if they have the features you are looking for. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Here are some key questions:

- Do you want a website that is quick and easy to create and edit?
- How much time do you want to spend creating and editing the site?
- How much do you want to pay?
- How customized do you want your website?
- Is specific branding colors and font important to you and your business?
- Will this website also include an online shop?

Many of the major website builders also double as website hosting services (examples include Wix, Shopify and Squarespace). Choosing a one-stop service can help streamline the process of creating your website. Each program offers various website templates that allow beginners to create professional looking websites with relative ease. However, some website builders restrict how much you can customize their templates. So if that is important to you, make sure you research the options.



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If you want a high level of customization with your website, you may need to keep your web hosting service and website building program separate. The website building program is where you create and maintain web pages, and the hosting service is where all your files are located. Most website building programs can link directly to your web host for easy uploading and updating of web pages. This option can be more involved (from a technical standpoint) than when the two services are combined, but is still very manageable. Some expertise and support may be needed during the initial stages of setting up and creating your website. After that initial learning curve, maintaining the website is quite simple.

Content

Every business website is unique, and the kind of content you provide will depend a lot on the type of business you have. That said, make sure to include the following basic information:

- Your business name and location on the main home page and on the footers of subpages.
- Contact information including street address, email address and phone number.
- Current, quality images of your products and farm or ranch.
- An “About Us” page that portrays your unique business and brand.
- A shop page or where customers can find your products.
- Links to social media accounts.

Other information to consider including may be a frequently asked question (FAQ) page, subscription form to capture emails for email campaigns, reviews from past customers, and a blog.

How often should I update the website?

Keeping all online information up to date is very important and that includes your website. Most important are your hours of operation, product availability and any other updates customers should know when coming to your farm. We recommend you have one dedicated family or staff member monitoring the website and checking in seasonally to see if information needs to be updated. If your business does not have a lot of changes throughout the year, it may be updates have to happen less frequently.



Photo: Audrey Comerford, OSU Extension Agritourism

Additional Resources

[7 Simple Steps for Creating a Website](#) (Community Alliance With Family Farmers)

[Best Web Hosting Providers: Top 11 Reviewed Website Builder Comparison Chart](#)

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