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Social Media/Mobile Technology Tools for Ag Businesses

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Introduction

The internet and cell phones changed the way we communicate with each other. Many consumers now use their smartphones or tablet devices to connect to and interact with local businesses. Mobile technology tools can be a practical way to communicate, connect, and engage with your customers, especially as social media becomes increasingly important. The challenges of 2020 made mobile technology and social media more important than ever to direct marketers and small businesses. Mobile technology tools are becoming more accessible to rural areas, offering different options to both businesses and customers to connect with each other and increase the ease of transactions.

Mobile technology tools and applications are also increasingly used by producers in farm management and marketing. Tools and applications that help with record-keeping, commodity updates, weather reports and other management areas are increasingly being used by producers, with specific applications created for farms of all sizes and types. However, there are so many tools and applications, it can be hard to decide which to use. This profile is intended to provide a summary of social media tools and mobile technology applications that may be useful to growers in connecting to their customers, as well as keeping better records for themselves. With so many mobile technology applications available for all types of farmers (crops, grain, cattle, weather, news, finances, etc.), producers interested in more applications for agriculture should visit

https://www.growingproduce.com/fruits/here-are-the-top-mobile-apps-for-ag-in-2020-and-beyond/, or https://smallbiztrends.com/2018/09/agricultural-apps.html, or browse online app stores by searching "Agriculture Apps" or "Farmer Apps."

Social Media

Social media is the virtual interaction among individuals and businesses in which they create, share or exchange information through online networks and communities. Social media allows users to quickly and easily share photos, graphics, text, videos and other content. Often, frequency and immediacy are the top advantages noted for using social media channels as part of a business marketing plan. Social media is useful for building and strengthening relationships with both current customers and potential customers, as the increase in

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use of smartphones and tablets to seek and communicate with businesses continues with current and future generations. Social media offers the ability to interact with customers in an online space where they are comfortable. Also, many of the social media sites are free to use and can provide cost effective options for advertisement and promotion to targeted audiences.

With many different online tools and platforms that increase and enhance your ability to share information, how do you choose which channels to use? First, ask your customers! At the same time, define your goals for using social media. Then, spend your marketing hours where most of your customers are and sharing the information that you think is important to your customers.

Here are some tips to help you start marketing your business through social media:

1. Find the time: set aside time daily to work on Marketing
   - Multiply your efforts
     ○ Write one blog post → pull the most discussable sections and post on your Facebook Page → Use interesting quotes from it on your Twitter status → Edit the post for your paper/email newsletter → archive on your original website, too.

2. Sample Daily or Weekly Goals – pick a specific time to do this each day or week
   1. Update your Facebook and Twitter status (words or pictures)
   2. Respond to comments
   3. Like five interesting links or businesses on Facebook
   4. Retweet three interesting links on Twitter

Mobile Technology

Mobile technology is broadly defined as devices used for cellular communication. The device is most commonly a smartphone or tablet that can store, create, access and organize data in various forms from a wireless location. Mobile devices use cellular phone connections to connect to the internet. Consumers frequently use their mobile phones and tablets to connect with each other, and search for businesses and information that they want. Social media sites are highly used by mobile device users, which can make market-

ing via social media channels very important, because consumers are constantly checking their phones for updates. Other applications or "apps" can also be used on smartphones and tablets. An "app" is a specialized program or piece of software downloaded onto a mobile device that is designed to fulfill a particular purpose.

In recent years the number of apps available for use on mobile devices has exploded. Apps are available for agricultural businesses and producers to help with record-keeping, time management, expected yields, livestock forecasting, pesticide information, marketing, up-to-the-minute weather forecasts, news, credit card payment systems, and organizing business contacts, among other things. It is often helpful to have all of this information at your fingertips, no matter where you are — in the field, in your truck, or waiting in a doctor's office. Mobile technology can help you collect and record better information about your business.

The end of this fact sheet lists some applications that are helpful in day-to-day farming activities, mobile payment options, agricultural business directories and other helpful websites for farmers. Note that many successful businesses use only a few of these tools — it's better to be on one social media platform and manage it well than to be on every platform without managing content and responding to potential customers.

Selected Resources
- "How to Choose Which Social Media Sites to Use" (Penn State University, 2018) https://extension.psu.edu/how-to-choose-which-social-media-sites-to-use
- "Developing a Social Media Strategy" (Penn State University, 2018) Free recorded online webinar. https://extension.psu.edu/developing-a-social-media-strategy
- Keep Your Social Media Marketing Legal (Penn State University, 2019) https://extension.psu.edu/keep-your-social-media-marketing-legal
- Social Media for Ag Business: How Can You Use This Tool? (Penn State University video) https://extension.psu.edu/social-media-for-ag-business-how-can-you-use-this-tool
- Social Media for Agricultural Businesses publication series (Penn State University, 2016) Facebook https://extension.psu.edu/social-media-for-agricultural-businesses-facebook

Twitter https://extension.psu.edu/social-media-for-agricultural-businesses-twitter
Blogs https://extension.psu.edu/social-media-for-agricultural-businesses-blogs
YouTube https://extension.psu.edu/social-media-for-agricultural-businesses-youtube

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Photo courtesy of Social Media Tab (http://www.socialmediatab.com/more/social-media-websites-directory/)

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For additional information, contact your local County Extension agent

Social Media Marketing Tools

Facebook http://www.facebook.com/	Facebook is an online social utility that connects people and organizations. **Facebook pages** are incredibly useful for businesses. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, to share links, to share photos and videos and to learn more about people and organizations. Facebook pages are fully customizable — so it's like a mini website. Facebook also offers many other sharing and promotional tools that can spread your online presence.	Helpful tips: • Post or schedule a status message or picture 5-7 days per week • Share pictures, success stories and ideas from others • Respond to questions asked on your page • Share updates and info from other business pages • Include maps – now many apps for GPS/car/mobile devices will add your business to the search component
Twitter https://twitter.com/	Twitter helps you create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. Twitter is a great way to connect with people and discover what's happening. A Tweet is an expression of a moment or idea. It can contain text, photos and videos. Businesses use Twitter to share information about their services, gather real-time market intelligence, and build relationships with customers, partners and influencers.	Helpful tips: • Share often: pictures, text or videos • Keep tweets short and sweet (limit 280 characters) • Make it relevant to real-time • Follow others that are interesting or related to your business • Retweet information that you'd like your customers to see
Instagram http://instagram.com/#	Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo or take a video with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image to convey what you want, then post to Instagram. You can even share to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and more. It's a new way to see the world. Businesses are using Instagram to connect to their customers in new, exciting and interesting ways.	Helpful tips: • Create a brand specific marketing strategy, then create hashtags to go along with your brands • Share trending hashtags, like your followers' photos • Mention your customers • Show your products being used in real-time, in real-life • Show your products creatively
YouTube http://www.youtube.com/	YouTube is the world's most popular video sharing website. Anyone with a Google or YouTube account may upload videos free of charge, and share them through email or other websites (i.e. Facebook or blog). Keywords and tags drive the search function, so it is best to populate the tag fields of all videos with useful keywords. To get started: http://www.youtube.com/create_account	Helpful tips: • Demonstrate products; show off your expertise, share knowledge, market your programs and connect with users, profile your customers • Start with the camera you have • YouTube is free and houses tons of space for you to use, then embed the videos into your website, blog, Facebook and Twitter accounts
Pinterest http://www.pinterest.com/	Pinterest is a social network that allows users to visually share and discover new interests by posting (known as 'pinning') images or videos to pinboards and browsing what other users have pinned. Pinterest is a place to discover ideas for all your projects and interests, hand-picked by people like you. Businesses can be discovered by millions of people looking for things to plan, buy and do.	Helpful tips: • Pin strategically & creatively: integrate online and offline strategies • Re-pin & like pins from others • Use tools available from Pinterest • Be copyright savvy and pay attention to details • Research and track where your pins are going and who is looking at them
Blog http://www.wordpress.com/ or http://www.blogger.com/	A blog is an online journal. Blogging = Sharing: Blogs are a great way to share your products and ways to use them, as well as sharing everyday insights and keeping up with current events that are concerning you. Blogging = Business: Blogs are a means for your business to tell the world how you think about your products, how you produce them, and what you do with them. Treat your blog as a place that is directly tied to your overall business objectives and marketing plan.	A few tips: • Regularly updated website, or section of a website • Write down customer questions; blog the answer • Use it as a space to carry out your marketing plan • Give your blog a human face – allow readers to know that they are doing business with someone they trust. • Focus on what customers want to know, not what you want to tell them about your business
Linkedin http://www.linkedin.com/	LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network site. With more users than any other professional social networking site, LinkedIn is a place to build, maintain and track professional contacts. In addition to management of personal contacts, LinkedIn can be an effective means of self-promotion, providing space to maintain a living and public resume of work and educational experience.	Linkedin Learning Center: http://learn.linkedIn.com/

Mobile Technology Applications for Agricultural Producers

Evernote	Evernote is an app that coordinates message- and note-taking. Notes can be formatted as written comments, photos, audio recordings, lists or a combination of these, and users can group them by assigning tags or compiling notes into notebooks. Users can share notes with others via messaging, email or other communication tools.	Basic version is free and provides 60 MB of space; a premium version – $7.99 per month – provides benefits such as mobile offline access and search functions. A business user plan for $14.99 per user per month allows two or more users to administer and collaborate content. App available for Apple, Android and Windows: https://evernote.com/
SoilWeb	The SoilWeb app provides GPS-based, real-time access to USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service soil survey data, formatted for mobile devices. This application retrieves graphical summaries of soil types associated with the user's current geographic location. Images are linked to detailed information on the named soils. This application was developed in a partnership between the University of California, Davis and NRCS.	Free. Interfaces with Google Maps and Google Earth. App available for Apple and Android: https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/soilweb-apps
IPM Toolkit	IPM Toolkit (Integrated Pest Management) aggregates news stories, videos, images and publications that help producers to manage pests. The images component enables users to search for images that highlight a particular pest and save the search results. You can customize the news sources in this app to relate to your local agricultural needs. Developed by researchers in the University of Wisconsin Nutrient and Pest Management Program.	Free. App available for Apple and Android: http://ipcm.wisc.edu/apps/ipmtoolkit/
AccuWeather	AccuWeather is a weather app that shares weather forecasts. For current conditions, the app provides basic weather statistics, such as temperature, dew point and wind speed. The long-range feature projects weather conditions for the next two weeks. The map is animated. Other features include weather news stories, video and social media tool aggregation. The app is visually appealing and easy to navigate. If you farm in multiple area codes, it is easy to switch back and forth among multiple locations. The map animation shows only a short history of system movements; no projected storm movements are available in map form.	Free. App available for Apple, Android and Windows: https://www.accuweather.com/
Tomato MD	Tomato MD is an interactive reference that helps gardeners, professional growers and consultants identify and manage more than 35 key diseases, insects and physiological disorders of tomatoes. This app is unique in that tomato experts have peer-reviewed all content to ensure the images and information are accurate. And while the information was reviewed by scientists, it is very accessible, published in an easy-to-use, non-scientific format.	$0.99 app purchase price. App available for Apple: https://www.apsnet.org/publications/apspress/Pages/apps.aspx

Mobile Technology Payment Applications

Square	With the Square Card Reader you can accept debit/credit cards on your iPhone, iPad, iPod touch or Android device. You can also accept cash and checks free of charge (Square helps organize those transactions). The app is free, and the appliance is too. There are no contracts, no monthly fees and no set-up costs. Only 2.6% plus 10 cents per transaction. Payments can be automatically sent for deposit to your bank account. Analytics help you track sales, collect tips and tax, and even send receipts via email or text message. The Square Card Reader is secure to protect your business and your customers. The Square Register, which generates helpful reports, can be used on an iPad.	Free App. Free appliance upon registration. App available for Apple and Android: https://squareup.com/ • Each transaction costs 2.6% plus 10 cents per transaction for Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express. • Manually entered cards cost 3.5% plus 15 cents per transaction
Intuit GoPayment	Intuit GoPayment takes all credit/debit payment types anytime, anywhere. The system works with Quickbooks to sync transactions with sale records, and lets you customize receipts to serve your business needs. No termination fees, safe and encrypted mobile credit card processing, payment is sent directly to your bank account. Two plans available to fit your needs.	Free App. Free Appliance upon registration. App available for Apple and Android: https://quickbooks.intuit.com/payments/mobile/ • 2.4% +$0.25 per swipe • 3.4% + $0.25 for keyed entries
PayPal Here	PayPal Here offers an array of point-of-sale solutions for all merchant types and sizes. From supporting multi-locations, inventory management and reservations, each unique business can customize to its needs. Payments can be made via credit and debit cards, cash, check, mobile payments and through invoicing. PayPal Here on iPad delivers a mobile payment experience that's easy to use and engaging for your customers.	Free App. Free Appliance upon registration. App available for Apple and Android: https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/credit-card-reader • 2.7% per swipe
Clover	Clover is similar to Square. Accepts credit and debit card payments directly on a computer, tablet or smartphone. Takes care of all incoming payments: in-store orders, mail orders or invoices.	App available for Apple and Android. Multiple device options: https://www.clover.com/ Monthly fees waived for the first 30 days, $9.95/month after that. Simple flat rates: • For payments taken virtually or entered by hand, 3.5% + 10¢ per transaction. • If you use a Clover device to take payments, the rate drops to 2.7% + 10¢.

Online Farm or Agricultural Business Directories

Local Harvest	LocalHarvest connects people looking for good food with the farmers who produce it. LocalHarvest provides online tools that help small farmers thrive. The *LocalHarvest National Directory* lists more than 30,000 family farms and farmers markets, along with restaurants and grocery stores that feature local food. Each member creates and maintains their own listing. Other services include a weekly email featuring customized local food and farm events and a monthly newsletter.	http://www.localharvest.org/
USDA Local Food Directories	USDA's Local Food Directories update and registration site for local food retail and wholesale outlets is a free service to help you advertise your business and connect with buyers. The ease of use and quick data entry available with the *National Farmers Market Directory* has been expanded to the *National Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Enterprise Directory*, *National Food Hub Directory*, and the *National On-Farm Market Directory*.	To add your information or to update your listing, visit: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories
Food Industry MarketMaker	*MarketMaker* is a national partnership of land grant institutions and state departments of agriculture dedicated to the development of a comprehensive interactive database of food industry marketing and business data. It is currently one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the country. All the information can be mapped and queried by the user.	http://foodmarketmaker.com/
Kentucky Department of Agriculture	The Kentucky Department of Agriculture* is dedicated to helping farmers expand markets for Kentucky products and enhance rural economic development. KDA also oversees the Kentucky Proud Program, a promotional program that is free for Kentucky's farm families to participate in. Kentucky Proud is not only a way to provide safe and nutritious foods for your loved ones, but it is an investment in Kentucky's land, people and its future. So buy Kentucky Proud - "Nothing Else Is Close."	http://www.kyagr.com/ http://www.kyproud.com/ *try your own state department of agriculture website
Kentucky Farm Bureau	Kentucky Farm Bureau created the Certified Farm Market program to help farmers more effectively market their fruits and vegetables directly from roadside markets to consumers across the Commonwealth. Now, the program has expanded to include greenhouses, nurseries, Christmas tree farms, vineyards/wineries and meat/cheese farm markets. The Certified Farm Market sign welcomes you to some of the best farm markets in Kentucky. Its online search tool is very helpful and easy to use.	https://www.kyfb.com/federation/certified-farm-market/

Helpful Websites, Tailored to the Needs of Farmers

Harvie	Harvie is a sales and distribution platform used by tens of thousands of families each week to buy local food from farmers and distributors. Harvie offers customized farm shares, recipe suggestions, and an accessible platform for desktop and mobile to make it easy for members to support a local farm. Harvie helps farmers develop a marketing plan, materials, and use email and social media marketing to sell their shares. Offers automatic emails to members, customized labels for each share, and easy reporting of all customer and financial data to make it easy for farmers to manage their businesses.	https://www.harvie.farm/forfarmers/small-farm-central/
AgSquared	AgSquared provides a complete farm management plan solution. The software includes a set of planning, management, record-keeping, and analysis tools that *work together* to help your farm run more smoothly. Your seasonal crop plan transforms into your daily task list; your task list serves as the starting point for your records; and your records become the foundation for the next year's crop plan. AgSquared can help your farm be more productive, profitable and sustainable.	http://www.agsquared.com/ https://www.agsquared.com/solutions
Farmigo CSA Software	Farmigo provides CSA software available to farmers everywhere that helps farmers retain CSA customers, reduce costs, improve efficiency, and increase revenue and become more profitable. The system is completely customizable with 24/7 support and comes with a money back guarantee. The Farmigo software provides consumers with an easy way to subscribe to the harvest of a local farm as well as supplement their weekly food needs through the farm's web store.	http://www.farmigo.com/ http://support.farmigo.com/
CSAware	CSAware is software that helps CSA farmers run their businesses more smoothly. It streamlines some administrative tasks and automates others. It helps CSA farmers plan their harvest, schedule deliveries, manage drop sites, and keep an eye on their bottom line. Its ecommerce tools make online ordering easy for members. CSAware is a service of LocalHarvest.	http://www.csaware.com/
Barn2Door	Barn2Door tailor-makes websites and ecommerce platforms for agriculture-based businesses. It allows farmers to offer their customers a consistent, convenient buying experience across web, mobile, social and email channels.	https://www.barn2door.com/