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Project Proposal

PRVCGA Communications Audit

Abstract:

The Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association (PRVCGA) is a citrus grower association that represents commercial citrus growers in DeSoto, Hardee, Manatee, Charlotte, and Sarasota County in Florida. The role of PRVCGA is to keep members in the Peace River Valley region informed on issues pertaining to all aspects of the citrus industry. Our membership consists of approximately 250 grower members and 150 associate members. PRVCGA’s previous means of communication included a monthly newsletter and weekly update, both created by using Microsoft Publisher software. After requests from members to update and change our communications format, our organization explored many different options in order to find a more user and mobile friendly format. Many members felt that our newsletter looked outdated. We chose Constant Contact because of its simple format and its ability to link directly to our website and social media pages. Its web-based design enables our association to link a plethora of information to our membership. It also allows management to monitor how many views and “opens” are newsletter has, who has read the material, and who clicks on what. This is a communication tool that our association was severely lacking with our previous newsletter format.

1. Problem, Situation, or Need Addressed

The previous newsletter and weekly update is delivered to our membership through mass email. The PRVCGA newsletter and weekly update is a PDF file that is attached to the email. Members must click on the file to have it downloaded to their computer or mobile device. A PDF file is not the most mobile friendly choice and many of our members have trouble opening it up and reading its contents on their cell phones. Using a PDF for our newsletter, we cannot use hyperlink to link information to our website or other websites that direct our membership to citrus information or an advertisement website. We also do not have the capability with a PDF file to know who is actually opening and reading the material. Our advertisers, many of which are large chemical companies, have expressed concern with the previous newsletter format. They feel that they are not getting enough “bang for their buck,” as members cannot interact with their advertisement. Another necessity that needs to be addressed is that our newsletter format has not been updated in many years and many members feel that it is time for a change. As the new Executive Director, many members have voiced their opinions on how now is the appropriate time to change the format to signify change within the Association.

1. Proposed Audience

The proposed audience includes PRVCGA’s membership, which consists of approximately 250 grower members and 150 associate members. Our members are hardworking farmers, with a large majority of them being UF alumna. The majority of our members are men who are in their 40’s or older. Our other audience is our Associate membership who would like to advertise their products and services in our publications. Most of our audience is familiar with email and how to use a computer. However, there are about 70 members who prefer to have their newsletter mailed to them. With these members, we print out our online newsletter and mail the hard copy to them.

1. Proposed Activities/Products

The proposed activities have included switching to another communications format, Constant Contact. After many members directing us to Constant Contact, we researched it and decided that it could work for our Association’s needs. We have chosen Constant Contact as a new means to provide our membership with our Weekly Update, monthly Newsletter and event announcements. Constant Contact will allow our publications to be more user friendly on both a PC and mobile device. Constant Contact allows us to manage our marketing and create, send, and track emails from virtually anywhere using their mobile app. Constant contact permits us to design professional looking emails using a custom template that directly resembles our website. This creates consistency within our brand and Association. Constant contact also allows us to integrate our social media campaigns to extend our reach. Allowing us to track our campaigns with real-time reporting provides our Association with a detailed report on who is receiving our information. This information is very useful as we can use it to evaluate on what still needs to be improved upon within our Association.

1. Implications/Significance

Improving PRVCGA’s communications allows our organization to provide our members with the most up-to-date information about the citrus industry in the most efficient way possible. Updating our communications by using Constant Contact allows us to directly link our newsletter to our website and social media pages. Constant Contact also provides us with feedback on who opened the newsletter and who clicked on what link. This allows us to know who is reading our information and which members we need to do a better job on reaching out to. Constant Contact provides a much better format for advertising, as it allows us to hyperlink the advertisement directly to the advertiser’s website. This feature is desirable for businesses and opens the door to generate more advertising and income for our Association. Since the switch to Constant Contact we have increased our advertising by 20%.

1. Timeline

The timeline for implementation of Constant Contact consisted of one month of working with our Constant Contact developer and learning the program. Overall, we spent an average of 40+ hours on the switch. This time was spent on consolidating our information, designing our format, and understanding how the program works. On November 3rd, PRVCGA launched our first newsletter using the new Constant Contact format.

1. Feedback

Our growers have been very pleased with the changes to our communications format and many agree that our newsletter is much easier to read on a mobile device. They have expressed a great liking to being able to click on the links. Our advertisers have thanked us for switching to a format that showcases their company in a more efficient way. We have also increased our advertisements by 20%, generating more income for the association. We are very happy with how easy the program is to use and we are interested in learning more on how we can best take advantage of the new format.