

You can market your own horse! By Georgia Irby

There is no reason whatsoever that you can't sell your own horse, in markets ranging from \$2,500 to \$50,000. There really isn't a big difference in selling a \$2500 horse and selling a \$50,000 horse. The same principles apply to selling in all price ranges: honesty, quality and persistence.

For the sake of this article, let's assume that you have a pretty good idea of what your horse is worth, and therefore how to price it for sale. If you do not know how to arrive at this figure, you can get an outside opinion. Find experts you can trust.

Once you have evaluated your horse and determined its value in the marketplace, the next step is to find your target market. The best breeders trying to create a National quality offspring sometimes fall a bit short. Just because you spend lots of money and have multi-champions in your pedigrees, the laws of nature don't always deal you the best hand.

What is interesting about this situation, is that if you have targeted the "National Market" in the past and spent most of your time developing contacts appropriate to this market, you may not know where to begin to sell a horse priced under \$10,000. Conversely, if you are fortunate enough to produce a "National quality" horse for the first time, you might not think you have the skills necessary to market it.

Advertising suggestions:

\$10,000 and under - Local Market

Local horse trader magazines
Internet Marketing Sites
Horse Club Meetings
Local Horse Shows
Word of Mouth

Get involved with your local horse club. The networking you are able to do with your peers within your community is one of the very best advertising mediums available to you. Befriend local trainers and horse enthusiasts. Talk about your horses and invite people to your farm.

\$10,000 to \$20,000 - Regional Market

Regional Club Newsletter
Trade magazines dispersed throughout the entire region or state you live in.
Breed Publications - utilize color classified ads, classified ads and small display ads.
Internet Marketing Sites - average cost \$25 to \$50/month
Web Site of your horse's Sire, if available.
Direct contact with Professional Trainers within your Region.

This target market requires you to get out of your backyard. Most people willing to spend this amount of money, for some reason, do not want to buy from their neighbor. It sounds much more exotic to have purchased the horse from further away.

\$20,000 to \$50,000+ - National Market

Breed Publications - Full page, color display ads.
Web Site - your own
One on one contact with prospective buyers at Nationals, Scottsdale, Buckeye, and so forth.
National Trainers exhibiting the kind of horse you are offering

Direct Mail

For this target market, your presentation must be as impressive as your product. When utilizing the breed publications you need to use an excellent professional-quality photograph and have the ad professionally laid out. Many of you have become armchair graphic artists, what with all of the new computer programs and such - but trust me - leave it to the professionals at the magazine. Give them the basic outline of what you want and turn them loose to create a masterpiece. Their expertise is included in the price you pay for the ad, whether you use it or not. The same goes for a Farm Web Page - you have to get noticed in order to be effective. I placed a dynamic full-page ad in the *Arabian Horse World* for an unshown, yearling filly, which directly resulted in a sale in the National market price range. Next time you think advertising doesn't pay, think again.

Additionally, I have sold three horses in the past two years from simply talking to people at the U.S. Nationals. I went prepared with professional photographs assembled in a very attractive display, professional videos and pedigrees. People have a lot of time on their hands while attending the larger shows and are focused on the Arabian horse business as they are totally consumed by it through sight, sound and smell.

The following "project" will not only enable you to acquire your own database, but will provide you with a complete timeline of your business - quite useful in the event that the IRS requests the pleasure of your company for an audit.

The most valuable resource you will ever have is a **Sales & Correspondence Journal**.

Purchase a large 3 ring binder and title it: Sales & Correspondence Journal.

Using the purchased tab divider sheets, separate the book into the following categories: **General Correspondence, Advertisements, Mailing List** and **each horse** that you own - whether for sale or not.

Every time you receive a response on a horse you have for sale, take down the following information:

Name of the person calling

Farm name and mailing address

Phone number, fax number and email address

What advertising medium did they find you in or how did they hear about your horse for sale.

Additionally, try to spend as much time "visiting" with your potential buyer as possible. Make notes while you are talking. If you tell them you are asking \$50,000 for the weanling filly they called on, and they gasp and choke - don't let them hang up. Find out what price range they are looking in, their wants, needs and goals. After you complete the call, list all of this information on a single sheet of paper. File it under the name of the horse they called on, or if it was a general call, file it under "**General Correspondence**". This information will prove valuable in the future.

Over the years, your journal will grow and with each marketing venture you begin, you can utilize it as your very own database of potential buyers. You will form relationships with "your clients," as you keep in contact with them through your continued marketing attempts.

Under the section, "**Mailing List**", keep a current mailing list printout from your computer or by hand, so that you have ready access to phone numbers and addresses. To begin your list, sit down with any past sales records, your regional club directory and your breed publications. Enter the name of every person you have ever met personally and then the names of those you would like to meet in the future. Include people even if you don't think they would ever buy a horse from you: the networking is what will prove invaluable. Continually add to and update this mailing list. Every time you are introduced to someone at a horse show, club meeting or other event, remember their name

and obtain their correspondence information. Usually the person doing the introduction can be quite helpful here. When you enter their information into your mailing list, make a few notes - where you met them, what discipline do they specialize in, what stallions do they breed to, and so on. This information will help you tailor your database to a specific market in the future.

Sharing resources is another excellent way to market your horse. If you get a call from someone looking for a horse that you can't provide, get all of the information you will need to correspond with them as well as the specifics about the type of horse they are looking for. Let them know you will make a few calls and keep their information on file. Include this information in the "**General Correspondence**" section of your Journal - you have just added another potential client. Start asking around to see if anyone you know has a horse that your potential buyer would be interested in. Even if no one does, they will certainly appreciate your thinking of them and would probably return the favor.

Make 2 copies of every ad you place and every piece of correspondence you send out. Put one copy behind the tab of the particular horse you advertise. Put the second copy under the "**Advertisement**" tab and a note as to what publication it was in, and what results were obtained from it. This will not only help you in the future with the IRS, but will help you assess what is working, and what is not. You will be so surprised at how fast your Sales & Correspondence Journal grows.

We have the opportunity to meet and develop new contacts all the time. By having your own resources all combined in one neat package, you are able to see at a glance where your efforts are paying off and where they are lacking. Use your journal to help develop your personal relationship skills as well as to promote your business.

DIRECT MAIL

Now that you have created your own database, it is time to try direct mail. The first time I mailed out information to people who had not asked for it, I felt very uncomfortable. However, direct mail has been successful for me and I highly recommend it. It accomplishes two things: it keeps your name fresh in their mind, and promotes a unique image.

Somehow in the highly competitive marketing world, you need to do things that set you apart from the rest of the crowd. Borrow ideas from other trades. For example, I borrowed a unique idea from the real estate trade: an eye-catching postcard. On the back you can have your farm name, logo & address. The photo you chose should be something that will capture your audience's attention immediately. These impressive postcards are an ideal way to keep in contact with clients in your database. I use them for everything from foal announcements to wishing fellow competitors good luck at upcoming shows.

Hopefully at this point you have attracted an interested party who wants more information. You need to send them your professionally prepared sales presentation – immediately.

Your Presentation package should include the following:

- 1.) Professional Video
- 2.) Legible, neat Pedigree
- 3.) Cover letter
- 4.) Business Card

NEVER send out poor quality copies of pedigrees, home snap shots or videos copied over your favorite soap opera – or worse yet, someone else's sales tape that you received last month. Take your pedigrees to your local copy center and have them copied on a decent paper, preferably on your own

stationary. Use professional photographs that have either been reproduced with the aid of an excellent color copier, (with the photographers permission of course), or the originals themselves. For the videos I recommend ordering the short play tapes and applying professional labels to them. You can order labels from catalogs for as little as \$6.95 for 24. These add just the right touch of professionalism to your sales packet.

The United States Postal Service provides a free box – just the right size for your presentation package, to be mailed priority. So for \$3.30 you get a highly visible, red, white and blue, sturdy cardboard box that arrives to your potential buyer in two days. Your buyer's first impression of you is one that says you take your business seriously and you appreciate their time.

I normally wait one week after I have calculated the buyer has received the information. Then, if I haven't heard from them, I call them. Follow-up is critical at this stage. You don't want to be pushy, but you do want to stay plugged in and offer any additional information or explanation that they may need.

Most people have no luck at marketing their own horses because they never try. They are afraid to try something for fear that it will be wrong. There is no right or wrong when it comes to marketing horses. Some things are more effective than others, but the key to success is to be persistent in your efforts. Don't expect too much, too fast; I can't tell you how many times I have had people call me months after I ran an ad – MONTHS!

I hope that some of my ideas help give you the courage to sell your own horses. Nobody ever said it was easy, but if I can do it, anybody can!