45 IDEAS: How to Find Leads and Get Their Attention

MODERATOR

Pat Trowbridge is currently an Equine Media Consultant and has been involved in the equine industry for 30 years. He began his publishing career in 1996. During his 30 years; he has held many positions including Advertising Sales Representative, Advertising Sales Manager, and Advertising Director for Equine Group Publications, Director of Corporate Special Projects, Associate Publisher for Trade Titles, Vice President/Group Publisher: Equine & Farm and English Group Publisher (Practical Horseman, Dressage Today and In Stride). Pat grew up riding horses on his family's small farm in Kansas. He resides in Southern California with his family.

PANELISTS

Emily Alberti is the Director of Advertising for the Paulick Report, an independent thoroughbred website that covers all aspects of the industry. A Maryland native, Emily, has over 25 years of advertising experience. Growing up as a trainer's daughter enabled her to gain invaluable hands-on experience both at the track and on the farm. Outside of work, Emily serves on the Blue Grass Farms Charities Board of Directors as well as the Marketing Communications Committee at TAA.

Meredith Ekstedt is the Director of Brand Marketing and Strategic Partnerships at the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association. She has more than 20+ years of experience in PR, marketing, and creative leadership across major brands and Fortune 500 companies. Before USHJA, she worked with Lands' End, Levi's, BITTEN by Sarah Jessica Parker, and Donna Karan. She began her career at Hearst Magazines and Condé Nast. Meredith is a lifelong equestrian and creator of the Instagram account @HearthHorseStories.

Liz Moyer is the Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator for the United States Pony Clubs, Inc. national office in Lexington, Ky. She is passionate about educating those new to horses and introducing people to the equestrian world. In her role at Pony Club, she enjoys building partnerships to support Pony Club's mission of growing the next generation of equestrians and leaders. Liz is a graduate of the University of Colorado's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She is the former editor of Horse Illustrated and Young Rider magazines and previously worked

in advertising. Liz enjoys dressage and trail riding, has a soft spot for senior horses and dogs, and is currently owned by a pack of adopted Dachshunds.

Ruby Tevis is the Director of Marketing and Communications for TerraNova Equestrian Center in Myakka City, Florida. Ruby holds a Masters of Business Administration and Bachelor's in Marketing Communications from Midway University in Midway, Kentucky, just outside of Lexington where she is from. As a previous AHP Student Award Winner, Ruby is passionate about developing the next generation of media professionals in the equine industry. Her areas of expertise include media management during equine events, strategic marketing, and branding. She also oversees the production of the annual TerraNova Magazine, her favorite project each year.

Sarah Welk Baynum is a full-time equestrian journalist, freelance writer, and author based in Columbus, Ohio. Her work focuses on feature articles for print magazines, educational blogs and articles for equine brands and businesses, and press releases for equestrian events and competitions up to the FEI level. She frequently interviews top riders and equine industry professionals across multiple disciplines, including eventing, show jumping, and western performance sports. She also co-hosts The Equine Connection podcast for her client, Tribute Equine Nutrition. In addition to her client's work, Sarah writes fiction and is the author of six romantic suspense equestrian novels. Before becoming a full-time writer, Sarah worked in several roles within the equine industry and studied equine business and facility management at Otterbein University. When she's not writing, she competes her off-the-track Thoroughbred in show jumping and eventing.

1. **Troll your competitors, who is advertising with them, and what are they doing.** Easiest sale as those companies are already targeting your industry and already spending money. Half of the work is done!

2. **Look at the audience you already have.** Check your email list, website traffic, and social media followers. Many people are already paying attention to your content but have never been contacted as a potential partner or advertiser.

3. **Sign up for Press Releases.** They are a valuable source of contact information, as well as news and what is going on within the industry. As an AHP member, be sure you are receiving the AHP press releases!

4. **In-person activations.** Get involved in the community and with other organizations.

5. **Treat freelancing like a numbers game.** The more companies you research and contact, the greater your chances of finding the right opportunity. Consistent outreach increases your odds of success. It really is a numbers game, and every no brings you closer to a yes, so remember, the more you reach out, the better your odds of finding more work now or later.

6. **Social Media.** Look for clues to products in posts, photos, video clips. I have seen stallion farms using the vacuums, hoofjacks or other products you may think are not a fit. Put on your detective hat.

7. **Follow the brands already spending money in the sport.** If a company is sponsoring horse shows, events, or riders, they are already investing in the equestrian audience. That makes them a strong potential lead.

8. **Read/Listen/Watch:** Make time to at least skim equine-related media outlets and publications of all types, including your competitors. Note who is advertising and keep an eye out for potential leads in the news and content. Also look for thought leaders in the industry and keep an eye out for emerging trends.

9. **Brand partnerships.** Align your brand with brands who have a similar customer base.

10. **Plant seeds before you need them.** Even when your workload is full, keep identifying ideal clients and introducing yourself wherever you go, whether you're scrolling online or at a horse show. You could also add them to a list of potential clients in case you're looking for work down the road. Budget cuts and staffing changes happen often, so any connection now can become future work.

11. **Attend Industry Events.** Who are the sponsors, who has a booth, who is covering the event. Pick up flyers, magazines, directories, walk the trade show.

12. **Watch what your competitors are doing.** Look at who advertises in other equestrian magazines, websites, podcasts, or livestreams. If they are spending money there, they may also be interested in working with you.

13. **Scope Out Social Media to keep up with the latest.** Follow brands, media outlets and key individuals in the industry.

14. **Social Media:**
    - Organic - contests and collaborations to generate engagement.
    - Paid - paid advertising with a catchy hook to get lead information.

15. **Attend equine industry events.** Events like Equine Affaire or industry conferences such as AHP bring together brands, media professionals, and businesses from across the industry. Vendor areas are a great place to introduce yourself and learn more about companies that may need your services. Always carry business cards—you never know when a quick introduction could turn into a future opportunity, and attending the event to find new clients can also usually be a business tax write-off.

16. **Watch events on TV or streaming services.** Eclipse Awards, Racing, (like Fanduel TV) - Any big equestrian event. Who has commercials in that timeframe?

17. **When a company launches a new product or announces something new, it usually means they are in growth mode.** They may have marketing budget.

18. **Think Outside the Box.** Look outside the equine industry for synergy. For example, non-horsey businesses and organizations may be interested in supporting an event in the local area. Or they may appreciate being introduced to a new audience.

19. **Survey:** Even if the lead hasn't already heard of your brand, they may participate in a quiz or survey for a reward.

20. **Study website pages.** Study a company's website before reaching out. Look at their blogs, newsletters, photos, or other marketing materials—whatever relates to the services you offer. For example, I check whether a company publishes blogs, how often they post, and the quality of their written content, since blog writing is one of my main services. This helps you identify businesses that are more likely to need your help and makes your outreach more strategic.

21. **Use AI (ChatGTP or Copilot).** Ask them to search for a product or service. I used ChatGTP and the prompt, "Find new advertisers for the paulickreport.com" It gave me a list of categories. I then asked "Narrow this to 10–15 "most likely to say yes" advertisers."
    • IT gave me 4-tiers and several advertisers in each
    • No Brainers – Sales Companies and Farms
    • Consistent Budget-ready service providers – Vet clinics, Feed company by name
    • High End Niche brands – Mersant, Brookledge, Horseflight

22. **Use LinkedIn to find the right people.** Search for marketing managers, brand managers, or founders at companies connected to horses, outdoor lifestyle, or luxury brands. Those are often the people who make partnership decisions.

23. **Find the Right Fit.** You want to ensure the client will have a good experience as a sponsor/advertiser. Have a conversation, ask questions, and make sure it's a good fit. Finding the right opportunity can be a bit like matchmaking.

24. **Account wall:** If you have a blog or video library, create wall or make your customers create an account to get access to certain content.

25. **Use your equine industry network.** The horse world is small, and fellow writers, photographers, and marketing professionals often know who may be hiring or looking for the type of services you offer.

26. **Old school phone call.** You can get so much done in a 10-minute call vs an email. For Advertising your rapport with a company goes along way. I have clients I have worked with for 25 years now. That rapport can't be built over email.

27. **Start with a short, personalized email.** Reference something specific about the company or their recent activity so the message feels thoughtful and relevant.

28. **Warm Up for a "cold" call/contact.** It helps to do a little homework on a lead before reaching out—checking their website, socials and doing a little research beforehand can help set you up for success. For example, you can mention a recent campaign, offer congratulations on an anniversary, new product, etc. to add a personal touch and build connection.

29. **Eblasts:** Schedule strategic drip campaigns that maximize the valuable information your analytics tell you.

30. **Build a running lead list.** Keep a spreadsheet of companies you'd love to work with or reached out to already, including contacts, notes, and when you last reached out. This can really come in handy if you lose a client and need to look for more work.

31. **Facebook Message:** Yes, I have gained clients by reaching out via FB.

32. **Connect on LinkedIn first.** Sending a connection request with a brief note can create familiarity before reaching out with a business idea.

33. **Multi-Pronged Outreach:** Trying multiple communication channels gives people the chance to respond in the way that suits them best. If you are an extrovert or verbal communication is your strong suit, you might make a phone call your first point of contact with a follow-up email—and vice-versa.

34. **Testimonials:** Videos and written testimonials and reviews are critical to build trust.

35. **Personalize your outreach.** When contacting a potential client—especially in a cold email—mention something specific about their company, such as a recent product launch, or an event they were involved in. This shows you've taken the time to research their business and makes your message feel genuine rather than like a mass email. If you already use their product or service, definitely mention that as well—it helps establish an authentic connection.

36. **Zoom, Teams, whatever online video call system you use.** At least you get 100% attention and can see a face. So many people are multi-tasking and wearing so many hats that this is as good as a phone call, probably better.

37. **Meet in person at industry events.** Horse shows, conferences, and trade events are natural places to introduce yourself and start a conversation.

38. **Don't be a Pest.** Take a hint and know when to back off. If someone takes the time to express communication preferences about when and how often they prefer to be contacted, make note and respect those.

39. **Texts:** Tastefully executed text messaging can be effective, if done poorly it can be detrimental.

40. **Build rapport through shared horse connections.** In the equine industry, everyone shares a passion for horses. I've found that briefly talking about my horses—or even something simple like how the weather has been affecting horse activities lately—before diving into business helps build a natural connection and break the ice.

41. **Make the connection, by phone, email, in person.** Remind your contact of the connection – I was a XX trade show and got their name from… or Emily referred me to you…. Or I use your product daily… or I want to use your product… this world is all about connections!

42. **Ask for a warm introduction.** If you share a mutual contact, ask for an introduction. This makes the outreach feel more trusted.

43. **Have Something to Offer.** Take advantage of any opportunity to reach out with something to offer instead of an ask. It goes a long way toward building a relationship when you can reach out with something to show a client you are thinking of them and their needs.

44. **Retargeting:** Use the analytics from your advertising platform to retarget customers who have interacted with your ads and leads you already have in your CRM.

45. **Use a proposal template instead of quoting rates on the spot.** Rather than giving a price immediately over the phone or in a quick email, send a thoroughly written proposal after your initial conversation. A simple Word document proposal allows you to clearly explain the services you offer in detail, the value you bring, and how your work will support the client's goals before introducing your rate. It also gives you time to think through pricing based on the project's scope after a call, rather than feeling pressured to provide a number on the spot.

I've found this approach greatly improves the chances of converting a potential lead into a client, especially for higher-rate projects, because it presents your services in a more professional and thoughtful way.

45 Ideas Series is published by American Horse Publications ©2026

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