University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Cornhusker Economics | Agricultural Economics Department

2-24-2010

Tailoring Rural Community Web Sites to New Residents

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel
Panhandle Research and Extension Center, cburkhar@unlnotes.edu

Randolph L. Cantrell
Nebraska Rural Initiative, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rcantrell1@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/agecon_cornhusker

Part of the Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons

Burkhart-Kriesel, Cheryl and Cantrell, Randolph L., "Tailoring Rural Community Web Sites to New Residents" (2010). *Cornhusker Economics.* Paper 417.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/agecon_cornhusker/417

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Agricultural Economics Department at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cornhusker Economics by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

February 24, 2010

Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Department of Agricultural Economics
http://www.agecon.unl.edu/Cornhuskereconomics.html

Tailoring Rural Community Web Sites to New Residents

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	2/19/10
Livestock and Products, Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight	$78.24	$ *	$90.21
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	110.29	114.12	121.04
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	93.52	98.60	102.92
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass	134.76	144.95	144.58
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	57.54	66.10	66.10
Feeder Pigs, National Direct 50 lbs, FOB	65.00	*	*
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean	57.31	77.01	69.24
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Wooled, South Dakota, Direct	94.87	*	*
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB	246.20	239.49	253.88
Crops, Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	4.78	3.90	3.88
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu.	3.42	3.41	3.50
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu.	8.55	9.29	9.19
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	4.82	5.45	5.36
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN , bu.	1.73	2.33	2.30
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	190.00	135.00	135.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	77.50	87.50	87.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Premium Nebraska, ton.	85.00	*	*
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	135.00	107.50	103.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	44.75	38.75	35.50

*No Market

Recruiting and retaining new residents is critically important to communities that are experiencing either job growth or a declining population. City councils and village boards across the state often ask the question, "How can we bring in and keep new people today?" This issue has not gone unnoticed by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development or the University of Nebraska.

Both groups have conducted research that looked at various aspects of migration and retention. When the researchers came together to discuss their project results, it was clear that community web sites were a key tool used by new residents in the relocation decision process. It was also clear that new residents typically were challenged in finding the **right kind** of community information on local web sites. Instead of web sites making it easy for them to find information, they made it difficult and often undersold the community and region.

In the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension publication, *Tailoring Rural Community Web Sites to New Residents*, (http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/ec859.pdf) several web marketing suggestions are identified that were based on interpretations of research results. Listed below are just a few of these suggestions communities may wish to consider as they market themselves to new residents through community web sites.

What New Residents Tell Us

★ **Research Finding*: New residents shop around – a job and quality of life issues are a package.**

Most new residents consider multiple locations before choosing a community in which to move. Jobs are critical, but jobs alone may not bring new residents to your community. New residents also emphasize the importance of local quality of life considerations.

Possible web actions:

Community marketing efforts should feature those characteristics that make living in a given town and region special and desirable. Think carefully about what your location has to offer, and emphasize those amenities. They

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska Extension educational programs abide with the non-discrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

might include: natural amenities and outdoor recreational opportunities, safety, the quality of the school and healthcare system, water and air quality, available housing, arts and entertainment – even amateur or school productions, proximity to retail centers, events and festivals, volunteer and leadership opportunities, reasonable tax rates (yes, new residents may feel that Nebraska tax rates are good, compared to the location they left), clubs and organizations and religious institutions.

★ **Research Finding*: Some new residents are coming home, but for the majority, moving to this location is a new experience.**

About one-third of new residents can be expected to have had prior experience in the area to which they are moving. They may in fact, be coming home.

Possible web actions:

For those who are completely new to the area, they may have lots of questions about issues that current residents take for granted. Perhaps a community web site could post frequently asked questions (FAQs) from new residents. Or maybe testimonials could be highlighted, using Web 2.0 applications like *YouTube*, that focus on benefits that are often taken for granted, such as the cost of daycare, commute times, etc.

Another option might be to have a list of phone numbers on the web site for people that are commonly called during the initial relocation process (real estate agents, utility contacts, local school admissions representative, etc). If a community can make the relocation process look easy, it will be seen positively.

★ **Research Finding*: Web sites and family are key information sources.**

When considering relocation, new residents first look to the internet and family for information about a community. These two sources are used most frequently. Current co-workers, friends and current community residents are also consulted, but less frequently.

Possible web actions:

Does the community web site have an easily found "relocation" button or tab so that potential residents can find the information they need? This suggestion might sound obvious, but it can be easily overlooked.

Do local residents know this information is available on the site and where it is located? If family and friends are often consulted about relocation information, it only makes sense that they are aware of it. It could be a very helpful tool for them to use.

★ **Research Finding*: If we want them to stay, there needs to be easy and fun ways to meet people and to develop friendships.**

Attracting new residents is not the same as retaining them. Forty percent of the respondents in the UNL study were either not planning to stay in their current community or were not sure of their plans. A feeling of "belonging" in the community had the strongest relationship with the expectation of staying in the community.

Possible web actions:

Is there a way for new residents to easily contact someone if they are not finding what they need to support their non-work interests, and to introduce them to social networks where people share their interests? New residents want to connect with these kinds of groups.

Web sites could make it easier for them when a local name and contact information is shared on the site for local and regional special interest groups. For instance, they can include places of worship, social and civic organizations, book and garden clubs and all kinds of recreational groups like trap shooting, baseball, volleyball, etc.

★ **Research Finding*: Share your history, current successes and dreams for the future – communicate vision.**

New residents report that they were seeking a community with a vision for the future. Moving is a huge financial and emotional investment. New residents want to be assured that the community they choose will be progressive.

Possible web actions:

On the website, communities that have identified a vision for their future should emphasize that vision in their recruiting efforts, and identify opportunities for newcomers to participate in future activities. For example, does the local chamber or economic development group have a new resident task force where they can offer suggestions? This group could be one of many that are listed on the web site.

Planning efforts that showcase completed community projects should be highlighted. For instance, communities could post photos of their old and new school, if this was a recent change. Libraries, community centers, soccer or baseball fields and park improvements are all examples that could be considered. These examples illustrate community vision and growth.

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, (308) 632-1234
Extension Specialist, Community Development
Panhandle Research and Extension Center
cburkhar@unlnotes.edu

Randy Cantrell, (402) 472-0919
University of Nebraska Rural Initiative
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
rcantrell1@unl.edu

Burkhart-Kriesel and Cantrell were members of a research team funded by USDA funds from 2006-09. Other UNL Agricultural Economics faculty and staff team members included Bruce Johnson, Charlotte Narjes and Becky Vogt.

[*An overview of the research process and findings from the survey, focus group interviews with new residents and the on-line survey with community development professionals can be found at http://cari.unl.edu/buffalo/publications.shtml#Journal].