

Farming Forward

A Senior Project
Presented to

The Faculty of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science

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June 2019
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Introduction

How can the next generation be inspired to be problem solvers and innovators in order to impact the global food system? With the large millennial generation it is as important as ever to develop new platforms to spread agricultural awareness and literacy. With the millennial generation being increasingly connected to technology and media platforms, understanding how to create a mainstreamed farming blog will be valuable in reaching the future generation of agriculturalists.

This project will develop a proposal for a farming blog platform and review essential elements to include within a blog ranging from an up to date news section of top issues affecting agriculture, agriculture facts, and links to different agriculture movement campaigns. As well as career opportunities and career pathways which can correlate to class courses and career goals within different universities and technical schools.

The farming blog platform will also aid in increasing the interest of millennials to seek agriculture as their future professions by showcasing agriculture leaders from around the world in multiple stages of their careers ranging from university work to post graduation work and family farm operations. The overall goal of this farming blog and proposal is to create and showcase the creation of a platform which can highlight the importance of agriculture and the wide array of opportunities available in order to attract the new era of agriculturalists.

Background

With farm and ranch families composing just 2% of the U.S population the need for continuous outreach to the general public is at an all time high (AgAmerica, 2017). According to the latest statistics from the Ag Census and shared by the American Farm Bureau Federation, the US has 2.1 million farms worked by 3.2 million farmers. Millennial farmers make up 8% of that total, roughly 257,500 (Ag Lending, 2017). Over 20% of all farmers are beginning farmers with less than 10 years in the farming business. Millennials have a large range of characteristics which can make their farming professions succeed. These characteristics include a growing connection to technology, according to data collected by Digital Marketing Strategies and Insights on CMO.com, millennials own an average of 7.7 internet connected devices and use 3.3 of those daily (AgAmerica, 2017).

This can contribute to millennials being proficient with agri-technology, which has shown to have a growing impact on the success of farming. According to the Environmental Defense Fund a new generation of tech-savvy young farmers are reinventing agriculture by increasing efficiency and tackling fertilizer loss, water pollution and climate change through satellite technology(Environmental Defense Fund, 2019). Also, according to data found on the Automatic Data Processing Inc, millennials prefer the opportunity of a flexible work schedule and value experiences over material goods, working from home on a farm is as flexible as it comes and farmers are in agriculture not for the money but for the love of the job (Taylor, 2017). The future of agriculture is dependent on continuous outreach, advanced technological improvements and new generations choosing agriculture as their future professions.

Methodology

Inspiring the next generation to be problem solvers and innovators in order to tackle the growing demand of the global food system requires continuous outreach. Platforms must hold trust and demonstrate appeal which can target younger generations. According to Hubspot, millennials are 247% more likely to be influenced by blogs or social networking sites. When addressing the problem of attracting a new generation to agriculture we must first study the behavior of the demographic that will become our future. By developing an agriculture based farming blog it can target younger generations and bridge the gap between new generations and the agriculture industry.

1. Layout planning

First, evaluate the layout which will appeal to a younger crowd. Designate a webpage creator that is easy to navigate such as Wordpress and then begin brainstorming a title for the farming blog. Begin to layout the individual page tabs which will make up the blog. These should include: introduction, background, current agriculture news, agriculture careers with descriptions and career pathways as well as an area with career advice from different industry members and students pursuing a career in agriculture. The goal of this first step is to create a single concise platform and designate the different areas and subtopics to attract readers to explore the blog. Remember to have a clear vision of your goals and the ideas you wish to showcase and attract readers to.

2. Interview set ups

To connect with readers and provide real advice by professionals within different areas of the industry, gather testimonials and set up interviews. Make sure interviews are set up with different people who have experience in different areas of the industry. Develop the interview questions ahead of time and take pictures to upload to the blog as well. Interview questions should be clear and concise and provide answers which support your outreach goals for viewers. The goal of this second step is to develop ethos within your blog and provide real advice from experienced professionals within the field of agriculture.

3. Agriculture campaign connections

The farming blog should attempt to connect readers with campaigns centered around agriculture awareness and literacy. Connecting viewers to campaigns which target the spread of ag literacy connects to your goal of spreading the importance and growth of agriculture by allowing them to see the international growth. An example includes FarmHer, an organization centered around highlighting women pursuing careers in agriculture. The FarmHer website is a valuable campaign that can attract your viewers to see powerful agriculture

messages centered around women pursuing careers in agriculture. Similar agriculture literacy movements should be added on a link as well to provide readers the opportunity to explore their pages. The purpose of this step is to provide readers the opportunity to see and interact with various campaigns and agriculture movements.

4. Execution

After completing the layout, acquired the necessary testimonials and creating individual page tabs, it's time to build the website. Begin with the webpage creator you have designated and incorporate the steps listed above. Each area should cover your specific goals and hold visual appeal for viewers. Draft your pages and get prepared to publish.

Results

The author selected Wordpress, a free website builder, to develop a draft website template. Four pages were created to host material including an introduction page, a news section of top issues affecting agriculture, agriculture facts, and links to different agriculture movement campaigns. As well as, career opportunities and career pathways which can correlate to class courses and career goals within different universities.

To begin the introduction and background page the author choose a title fit to her outreach goal, "Farming Forward" with a short and concise title you can attract readers attention. The author then created an introduction framed around the importance of agriculture and the multitude of career opportunities. This page also contained a background section on the author which included education, career goals and their personal agriculture history. The introduction page also contained various pictures and statistics formatted to stand out and appeal to a millennial viewer through the use of pictures and font variations. The author focused on establishing their outreach goals by designating a strong and captivating introduction page followed by different areas and subtopics to continue to attract readers to explore the blog to its entirety.

After the formation of the introduction and background section the author incorporated a page with their acquired testimonials and advice collected from industry professionals. This page was titled "Why agriculture?" and focused on highlighting common questions, stereotypes and providing advice from both young and experienced professionals within the agriculture industry. The goal of this step was to provide viewers with real and raw life advice from experienced individuals.

The author then developed a page titled "Around the World" this tab includes campaigns and other ag literacy web pages that the author explored and researched which provide important outreach material and further immerse the reader into the growing agriculture industry. Links and short descriptive summaries were added onto this page for easy navigation.

Finally, the author provided a page titled "Career Pathway" this page was meant to explore different career pathways available and the college majors associated with acquiring a specific career or entering a career area. Within this page the author also provided links to job search pages such as AgCareer.com and Onet.com to provide the viewer the ability to navigate

straight to a job description and explore careers within a specific pathway. Descriptive summaries were provided underneath different majors such as Ag Science, Ag Business, Animal science, Ag Mechanics and Environmental Plant science with direct links to different job opportunities.

Conclusion

The author chose to use Wordpress for the blog development. This webpage creator provided the necessary tools to implement the outreach goals of the author throughout every step. The webpage provides an area of concise agriculture information for viewers while providing visual appeal and targeting agriculture as a future profession.

The author was able to accomplish her goal of creating a clear and concise new agriculture platform with visual appeal to attract viewers while creating individual pages to highlight the outreach goals the author originally set out to do. These include an introduction, background, agriculture careers with descriptions and career pathways as well as an area with career advice from different industry members and young professionals pursuing a career in agriculture.

The author created easy navigation throughout the blog pages by providing links to individual information within each page such as career pathways, job links, college majors and ag literacy campaign links. Incorporating additional pages and growing the blog beyond four pages would be an improvement the author would incorporate as they work to further the new platform.

Additionally, once the blog is launched, the author plans on incorporating marketing outreach strategies such as Facebook or Instagram in order to attract viewers. Another improvement includes adding additional testimonials and career advice and providing a hashtag in order to follow young professionals in their careers and showcase them within the blog.

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