

Vice Chairman Jim Miller, substituting for chairman Jason Settlemoir, called the Marketing/Communications Committee to order at 3:05 p.m. on Saturday, March 9.

Miller welcomed the attendees, took the roll call, committee members present were: Jim Miller, Chris Antonacci, Ivan Axelrod, Dave Bianconi, Dan Bittle, Barry Brown, Stacy Cahill, Lenny Calderone, Mike Kane, Michael Kimelman, Peter Koch, Tom Leasure, Mark Loewe, John Matarazzo, Chris McErlean, Stephen O'Toole, Scott Peine, Dr. Tim Powers and Dein Spriggs.

Miller turned the meeting over to Dan Leary for the first item on the agenda.

Leary welcomed Miller in his first meeting as committee vice chairman.

2018 Advertising Recap

Advertising was down in 2018 with Hoof Beats (6 percent), web banner advertising (11 percent) and STARS (8 percent) short of budget.

Some steps were taken late in 2018 to increase revenue, and those as well as some new ones are being instituted in 2019, including:

- USTA Advanced Marketing will complete second half of PA Marketing initiative with the Standardbred Breeders Association of PA and pursue other opportunities to partner on industry initiatives.
- Sponsorship for USTA-produced videos and broadcasts
- Hoof Beats themed issues to attract specific products and services as well as other industry entities to relevant themes and magazine will accept advertorials for the first time
- Just completed programming project (ads.txt) with EquiMedia (remnant ads vendor) that should immediately increase revenue from remnant advertising
- Have informed and will work with EquiMedia on NewLook website initiative to create more valuable real estate for ads on USTA revised website
- STARS has already sold two more stallion ads than last year, including 25 new ones

Social Media Recap

Leary called everyone's attention to the special social media booklet that was produced for this Annual Meeting. Discussed the formation of the social media team in late May and early June with hiring of Wendy Ross and Michael Carter, respectively, as well as the reassignment of responsibilities for Jason Turner. He commented on the creativity and new skills that the team brings to the USTA with Ross' and Carter's on-camera talents and Turner's ability to create high-quality, informative graphics. Leary also acknowledged Rich Johnston for his great camera work and editing skills as well as the award-winning photography of Mark Hall.

Leary introduced the team for individual presentations.

Jason Turner

Overview of team's accomplishments with social media numbers and growth. Explanation of the strategy on using ustrotting.com and Harness Racing FanZone social media platforms.

Wendy Ross

Explained strategy for the use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for the Harness Racing FanZone. Showed video clips of Lip Sync Battle done at Scioto Downs (150,000+ views and four other tracks or horsemen's associations "battled back"), Car Pool Karaoke with Corey Callahan and photo of special postcard produced for Foiled Again Farewell Tour and described how those promotions were done.

Michael Carter

Discussed the ustrotting.com Facebook and Twitter social media platforms and showed a video clip of the Dan Patch Awards announcement broadcast produced by the USTA. Carter then explained, Sprout, the USTA's new social media monitoring and analytics software and how it can be used to evaluate collaborative promotions between the USTA and tracks, horsemen's associations and other industry organizations.

Dan Leary

Presented slides of the Fox NFL Sunday and NHL Live TV studio sets as examples of the standard that the USTA used to create the virtual set for the Dan Patch broadcasts and showed a photo of the actual green room set at the USTA.

He advised the directors that the use of technology was a major theme of these meetings and that they should stay tuned to watch for more green room video in the general session.

Leary stated that the major takeaways from the presentation are...that the industry can utilize the talents of the USTA staff and the capabilities of technology to produce first-class social media content. The Sprout software allows for tracking results to determine what's working and what needs to be adjusted. But most importantly, with good communication and collaboration, the USTA can help the industry amplify their messages and promote important races and events on social media.

He encouraged all directors to use the #USTABOD19 hashtag on social media during the weekend.

Leary introduced Jim Miller to discuss how he uses different social media platforms to promote racing at Hawthorne Race Course. Miller explained how he works with drivers and other horsemen to interact effectively with fans.

Youth Delegate Program

Leary noted that the program was announced and launched at the Marketing/Communications last year and that the USTA staff has been very impressed with the youth delegates at their meeting here on Friday night (March 8) as well as with interactions with them on-site at the Hambletonian and Little Brown Jug. Leary announced that the full presentation of the Youth Leadership Development will be done on Sunday at the General Session by Gabe Wand.

USTA Advanced Marketing – PA Marketing Initiative

Leary noted that the USTA Advanced Marketing Initiative, which was announced by Russell Williams at the Annual Meeting last year, kicked off their first project with the Standardbred Breeders Association of PA midway through 2018. It is a three-tiered program involving traditional media buys in Hoof Beats and three local publications, digital media with ustrotting.com web banners and social media ads.

OHHA Marketing Initiative

Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association Executive Director Renee Mancino gave a detailed presentation of the organization's marketing program that commenced in April 2015. She described how the plan has been rolled out in phases.

The Plan - Phase 1 – Connect, Engage, Create, Measure.

Implementation – Phase 2

Mancino presented the creative assets of the program, including: HARNESSRACINGOHIO.com website, 15- and 30-second TV and digital media spots branded with four pari-mutuel tracks in Ohio, over-the-air and digital radio, search engine marketing, billboards, trailer wraps and (gas) pump topper signage.

She explained, geofence digital, a new element of the program that utilizes location-based audience targeting.

Mancino estimated that the total cost of the initiative to date is \$4 million.

USTA Newsroom

Leary explained the new look in newsroom since late October is due to switch of software to WordPress.

Daily Newsroom Schedule:

8 a.m. – 10 p.m. except Friday and Saturday until midnight (special race nights later than midnight)

He explained that there are too many stand-alone, non-racing, on-track promotional releases that are clogging the Track News section on the homepage that can't be used going forward. Leary recommended that promotional info be included in racing releases.

World Harness Handicapping Championship

Leary presented WHHC update explaining that in the past few years the prize pool had decreased from \$100,000 to \$80,000 to \$60,000 to as low as \$50,000. Last year, DerbyWars partnered with the Meadowlands to raise it to just above \$80,000 by increasing entrants through online contests. The target for this year's contest is \$125,000 and that could possibly be increased to \$200-250,000 over the next couple of years.

DerbyWars has revenue-sharing agreements with every track whose races are used in their contests, which should alleviate past concerns that these contests were diverting player money from tracks' mutuel pools to the contests.

In addition, the USTA will continue to work with DerbyWars to include as many USTA Strategic Wagers as possible in their contests with links to send them to the USTA website for free PPs to use for those races. It is reasonable to expect that some of the contest players, after doing their homework, will see value in making actual bets on USTA Strategic Wagers. As the prize pool grows, more players will be interested. This should provide tracks with the opportunity to attract more players and handle for on-track qualifying contests.

Leary asked Miller to discuss WHHC promotions at Hawthorne.

Miller described on-track and OTB contests that added to track handle and provided player contact information for future marketing.

Adjourn

Vice Chairman adjourned the meeting at 4:49 p.m.