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ADVANCED WEB OUTREACH TECHNIQUES: CAPITALIZING ON SOCIAL MEDIA, LIVE BLOGGING, AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT WITH AGRICULTURAL CLIENTELE

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ABSTRACT Social media websites, such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter are rapidly emerging as popular sources of agricultural and farming information. The advantages of agriculture professionals utilizing these tools for dissemination of information to clientele and peers are many faceted and include: no/low cost, real-time sharing of information, development of community, and direct engagement. The agricultural industry is emerging as a leader in social media. Large, multinational agricultural companies such as Monsanto have developed a strong social media presence. In addition, agricultural advocacy firms as well as individual farmers are using social networks to express opinions on agricultural policy. Agriculture professionals should recognize the importance of social media websites and their potential usefulness for sharing agricultural information. Social networks provide the ability to capture insight into opinion concerning agricultural issues from those with agricultural and non-agricultural backgrounds. The author provides impact that social networks have on the agricultural community, such as addressing H1N1, agriculture sustainability, and local food sources based on surveys from producers who utilize social media tools. An overview is presented on the ability of the user to utilize mobile technologies to disseminate information real-time via blogs and other social networks, as well as participating in a real time agricultural community on Twitter. The author proposes a web-based social success model that is built upon the ability to provide value for users and readers.

Keywords: Twitter, Social Media, Mobile Blogging, Blogs, Web 2.0, Outreach, Web Outreach.