

Office of Strategic Planning

INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF UT EXTENSION

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In 2010, Tennessee Extension launched a strategic planning process to honor the past and look to the future. The strategic plan provided a roadmap to guide Extension to achieve excellence and focus attention on what matters most: advancing Extension in Tennessee. The plan resulted in five overarching goals that included strategies and action steps to achieve each goal. One of the goals was to establish UT Extension as the primary knowledge source for Tennessee residents. Strategies to achieve this goal included:

- Develop an effective marketing plan.
- Inspire and empower employees and volunteers to market Extension
- Share Extension's successes.
- Increase visibility of Extension programs.

Background

Over the last 100 years, Tennessee Extension has helped Tennesseans solve problems and implement changing technologies to improve the quality of life throughout the state. Extension has often been referred to as a best kept secret, which was a common theme during the strategic plan listening sessions in 2009. It was determined that UT Extension should enhance marketing efforts to attract new

clientele, share impact and success stories, and inform communities of their educational services.

Purpose and Objectives

In 2014, a diverse implementation team representing a cross section of employees from across the state was charged with developing a statewide marketing plan to call attention to Extension's programs, services and impact. The team was tasked to:

- Develop an effective marketing plan.
- Use marketing and communication strategies to increase visibility.
- Plan and launch a comprehensive and ongoing media campaign.
- Develop a standardized, user-friendly process to capture, produce and share Extension's success stories with Tennesseans to promote programs, attract new clientele, and inform residents/communities of Extension's impact.
- Develop online marketing tool kits for employees' use in their marketing efforts to both improve efficiency and increase consistent branding.
- Provide training and materials to market Extension effectively.

Methodology

Survey of Extension Users and Nonusers

In 2014, the Visibility Team conducted a survey of Extension champions (adults who frequently use Extension’s services), and Extension non-users (adults who had agreed to survey research through a purchased database). The survey results informed actions of the team. Some messages from these results considered in creating training and tools were:

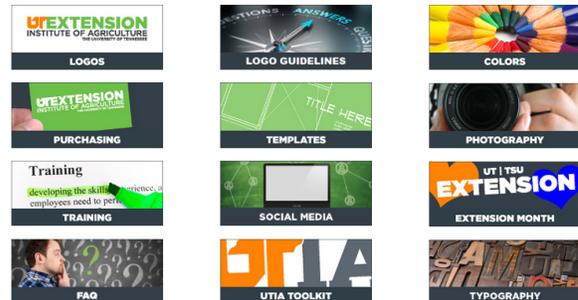
- About 60 percent of both users and nonusers found Extension as trustworthy or a reliable/current source of information; only 36 percent of this group indicated that university connection was important.
- 86 percent of champions were extremely or very likely to recommend Extension to people they know.
- Extension nonusers were people who had agreed to take surveys and had connections to organizations with similar interests as Extension. Approximately 50 percent of survey respondents had heard of Extension.
- Extension nonusers rated educational programs for home and garden, community economic development and environmental quality as more important than traditional agricultural-educational programs.
- Extension nonusers rated educational programs for home and family as more important for their community than for themselves and their family.
- 82 percent of Extension personnel rated their most used marketing tool as word of mouth.

Major Outcomes

Marketing Tool Kit

In partnership with UTIA Marketing and Communications and UTIA Information

Technology Services, the team developed a comprehensive online tool kit of marketing resources for Extension employees. The tool kit provides a one-stop shop for logos, templates, photos, colors and other resources for marketing Extension. In 2018, the addition of a logo shop allowed counties to purchase promotional items, such as hats, mugs and pens, and pick them up readily from their regional offices.



Extension Month

In 2015, the team facilitated a proclamation from the Tennessee General Assembly establishing the month of March as Extension Month in Tennessee. Extension Month celebrates the educational outreach, service and economic impact achieved by Extension across the state. County offices have used events and media campaigns this month to reach new clientele, appreciate current clientele, celebrate successes, and showcase their programs.



Digital Asset Database

In late 2016, the Visibility Committee launched a Digital Asset Database (DAD). This site is a one-stop location for quality photography that employees can download to use in presentations or promote their program, event or workshop. DAD uses unique keywords and metadata that makes

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searching for images easy and the search results responsive. Extension employees can submit photos that are reviewed for quality by UTIA Marketing and Communications personnel before being made available to all Extension employees.

Marketing Training

The team developed a two-day in-service training to train county teams to market Extension in their county. Teams had the opportunity to develop a county marketing plan to implement the training. The training was offered annually for three years, with 84 county groups attending in total. Training topics included:



- Logo Usage
- Social Media
- Customer Service
- Working with the Media
- Utilizing Volunteers to Help Market
- Written Communication

In 2016, a one-day Extension Month training was offered to help counties plan and prepare for Extension Month. Nearly all



counties were represented at the training with at least one staff member attending.

The Visibility Committee continues to offer a one-hour training twice annually at New Employee Orientation and works with UTIA Marketing and Communications to plan regular Zoom-based training on marketing topics and tools.

Storytelling

In 2016, the Visibility Committee began a pilot effort for a traveling storytelling kit for agents to use to capture Extension's success stories from clientele, retirees, employees and stakeholders. Collected stories are used as material for institutional history, promotional videos and more.



Sustainability Plan

In January 2016, the Increasing Visibility Team transitioned to the Visibility Committee, a standing committee made up of rotating members representing all regions and program areas, as well as one permanent UTIA Marketing and Communications liaison. The committee is led by a chair elected from the membership. Beginning in October 2017, the committee's efforts are coordinated through the Extension Evaluation and Staff Development department.

The committee works in three subcommittees: Extension Month, Storytelling, and Marketing Toolkit. The committee continues to implement ongoing projects, identify needs for marketing materials and training, and have introduced new projects, such as the Extension logo shop, photo contests and more.

2014 – 2015 Initiative Team

Team Leader

Amy Elizer, County Director, Madison County

Team Members

Michael Barry, County Director, Davidson County

Gabe Clemons, Graphic Designer, UTIA Marketing and Communications

Doug Edlund, Assistant Director, UTIA Marketing and Communications

Kathryn Hall, Extension Agent, Overton County

Carol Reese, Extension Area Specialist, Western Region

Chris Sneed, Extension Agent, Blount County

Jim Stewart, Regional Director, Central Region

Alan Windham, Professor, Entomology and Plant Pathology

Ex Officio

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D 116 05/20 20-0205 Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.