

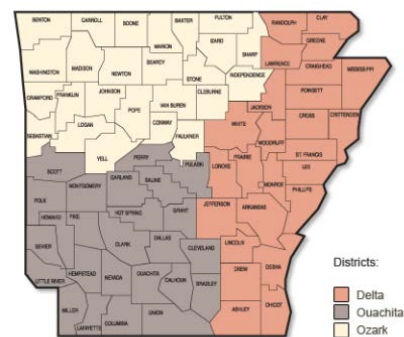


Social Media Strategy Proposal: Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Amy Cole
June 26, 2017

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

The University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service was established in 1905 as a government-funded educational organization dedicated to teaching the public through research-based “hands-on” training methods. Educational programming revolves around agriculture, youth development (4-H), family and consumer sciences (diet and exercise), business and voting education, and financial literacy. There are offices located in all 75 Arkansas counties, which are staffed by county agents (ag, 4-H, and FCS) who conduct training and offer advice largely free (or low cost) to the public on a wide variety of topics. Extension’s mission statement is simple: “We strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices.”



Arkansas Extension Office Locations Downloadable Map

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture - Extension (UAEX)
Published by The Washington Post (P) · June 16 at 2:00pm ·

This is why we do what we do! Agricultural education should start early in life, and through programs such as 4-H, we reach young minds and develop a knowledge and appreciation for agriculture during those formative years--before they make it to adulthood believing chocolate milk comes from brown cows!



Analysis | The surprising number of American adults who think chocolate milk comes from brown cows
Many people are agriculturally illiterate, researchers say. They blame the industrial food system.

WASHINGTONPOST.COM | BY CAITLIN DEWEY

2,363 people reached Boost Post

Like Comment Share

👍👍👍 Fred Miller, Mike Newman and 28 others

20 shares

Write a comment...

Along with county agents, there are support units located in Central Arkansas at the Little Rock state office. Specialists are also largely located in the state office and in Fayetteville where faculty conduct research. The specialist and faculty create and disseminate the best practices and training materials to agents who then train the public. All methodologies are research-based and thoroughly tested for efficacy. There is to be no bias in any of the methods supported by Extension (i.e. wholly free of paid interests) as the staff is funded by federal and state dollars. The ideals of a local, free, unbiased, and experienced staff are all positive messages throughout Extension programming and no other organization of its kind exists as a competitor.

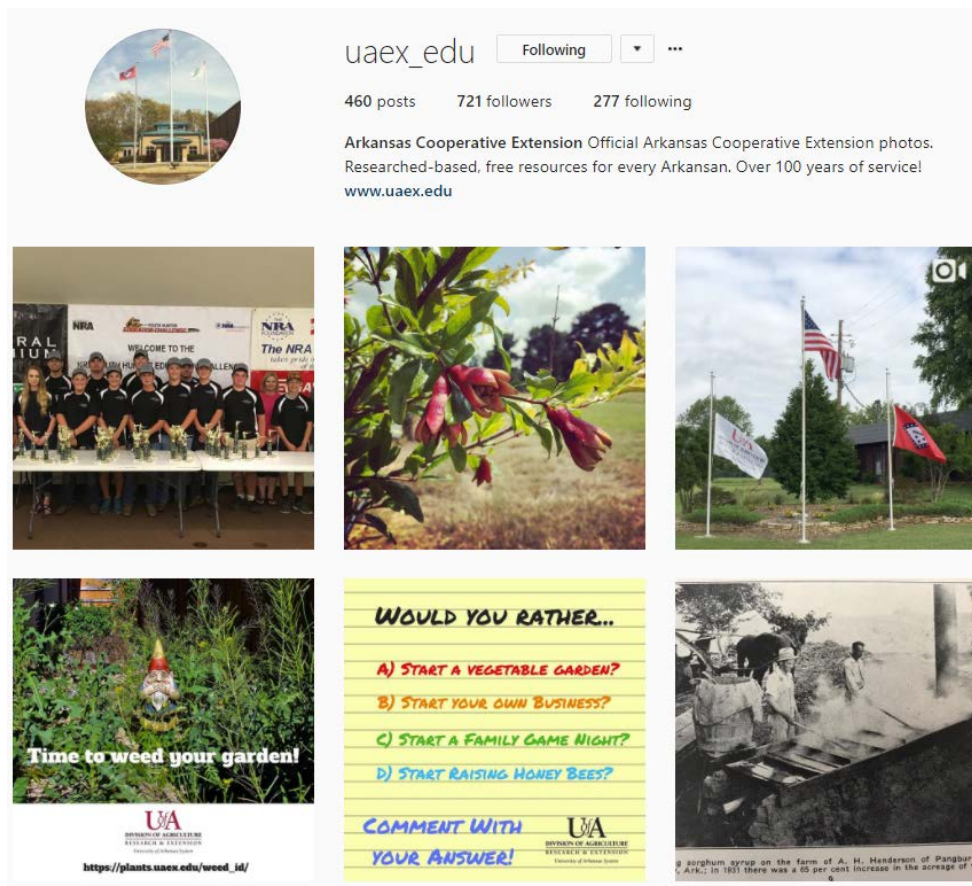
Volunteer organizations include EHC (Extension Homemakers Council), 4-H (youth development), Wellness Ambassadors, and Master Gardeners. The clubs represent thousands of [volunteers](#) affiliated with Extension programming and coincide with the Extension ideal of service the public.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Extension has utilized social media for several years. They started using [Facebook](#) in 2010 or 2011. The posts originally consisted of news article links to the website with no additional imagery or engagement methods. Since early 2015, the strategy has been more concerned with gaining followers and increasing engagement through the use of branded imagery, calls to action, and Q & A content. Reaching a younger demographic and building engagement with citizens of the state are ongoing challenges. The cover photo and profile image are updated seasonally or monthly in some cases to reflect timely issues Extension can address. The use of original photos and video along with unique content targeted at fans has helped to grow the audience from 1,200 in 2015 to over 4,600 by early 2017 all through organic (non-paid) traffic.

The [Twitter](#) account (reorganized/rebranded in 2013) has been a successful engagement path for Extension, as farmers and ranchers are a large part of the Twitter audience and the communications director often tweets/retweets to agents and specialists. Weather, commodity information, insect updates, and other relevant content are shared daily.

Extension joined [Instagram](#) in 2015 and has gained over 700 followers. The sharing and reposting content from agents has proven largely effective. Sharing Instagram to Facebook has also garnered more eyes on the platform as has including the Instagram feed on the Extension Facebook page.



In addition to the statewide Extension social media presence, local county agents use their own business accounts to communicate with their local communities. This is important as they serve as both brand ambassadors and subject matter experts in their areas. A [full index of active Extension social media profiles](#) is on the website. One downside to so many accounts, however, is that some go unused as people don't understand the importance of maintaining a regular presence, or they leave Extension and the page is then dead. Encouraging agents to have a plan in place before starting social media is a regular part of social media training.

[YouTube](#) is primarily utilized by the Communications department as a way to feature videos that promote Extension programming. It is not updated often, about once per month and is a definite area where growth is needed.

Finally, Snapchat is used by some of the 4-H agents and specifically the 4-H Livestock specialist Dr. Chelsey Ahrens. She successfully communicates with her youth on a daily basis. (It helps that she's in her late 20s and "gets" how social media works.)

BRANDING STRATEGY & CHALLENGES



Extension has a fairly established brand, largely utilizing the official logo which is featured prominently on almost all Extension print and digital publications. The length of the name of the organization and confusion over order of the name (does "division" go before "extension"?) has proven to be a challenge. Similarly, there is confusion over the University aspect of the branding. Is Extension part of the University? If so, why are they not located at Fayetteville? The wide variety

of programming Extension performs, while a strength, also causes confusion for clients. What exactly does Extension DO? It is difficult to explain an organization with broad goals (teaching ALL of Arkansas about almost EVERYTHING) in a concise way. Little to no marketing or advertising budget contributes to the lack of public knowledge.

Colors used in Extension branding are primarily red, gray, and black. 4-H utilizes a bright Kelly green on its materials but the UA logo is often shown next to or near the 4-H logo as well. Imagery is where Extension has the opportunity to shine. Large scale scenic images can be found on the official Extension [Flickr site](#), and each agent can now take their own photos for their social media and website pages.



The personality of Extension *should* largely be through its people and storytelling. The people of Extension are hard-working and driven with a desire to serve and reach out to the citizens to help educate them on best practices for all aspects of their lives. Pride would be the primary emotion one might consider when viewing Extension’s website and digital media.

Arkansas-based content relevant to its citizens is where Extension has a leg up over other paid-for national brands who aren’t connected to the state or its people. However, Extension struggles with finding a familiar “voice” while maintaining a feeling of authority and respectability for its methods and programming. Extension promises to deliver unbiased and proven methods of solving problems in the areas of agriculture, food, finances, business, and family. While they serve the public, they also are funded by the state, and recently money has dried up for many programs and salaries. Personnel are increasingly tasked with not only educating the public but also *legislators* on how important Extension programming is to Arkansans.

Extension is not a for-profit organization. While not necessarily individual competitors to Extension, there are for-profit companies which claim to have products for solving any number of problems that Extension methods can solve for free (or low cost). Our expertise isn’t for sale.

TARGETING RECOMMENDATIONS

Extension’s audience is broad. Ideally ALL Arkansas residents are potential clients of the programming. However, there are specific audiences where gaps in public awareness could be targeted. The agricultural communities do know about Extension as they are typically involved in 4-H activities or farming, and are familiar with Extension agents and services. However the urban citizens and those not involved in agriculture or 4-H may be ignorant of the breadth and depth of services they could be utilizing. Extension is also trying to target a younger demographic that is unaware of Extension programming, specifically those who could benefit from our lifestyle programming for financial literacy and healthy recipes.

For the purposes of this assignment, however, we will zero in on two of the potential audience growth areas for Extension: urban mothers/parents and “Homesteaders” or DIY types. Facebook has the widest reach of all the social media platforms, so content strategy will center around that channel. Some posts will be created for Instagram and shared to Facebook (such as throwback Thursday content).

64% of the current Facebook audience for the statewide Extension account is female. The highest concentration are between the ages of 35-44, and the primary fan base lives in larger cities such as Little Rock, Fayetteville, Dallas, TX (!), Conway, and Jonesboro. Typical Extension programming such as row crop farming content, would not fit the interests of the more urban demographic. Instead the focus should be on introducing Extension programming to an overlooked demographic: urban mothers.

Persona #1: Urban Mother, “Jennifer”

The name for the persona could be “Jennifer” and she would be characterized as about 30 - 35 years old with two or more children under the age of 13.

Her interests could include childcare and education tips (the #2 age group is 25-34, a primary age for mothers of young children), food preparation, and yard and garden/home care information. She is typically well educated or at least has some college experience, most likely works full or part time, and is tech savvy at least with regards to using apps and social media. She is always on the lookout for a good deal or even DIY methods for home or yard issues. She likes crafting and may be interested in “farm to table” food.



Persona #2: DIY guy, “Mike”

Homesteading is a popular concept today. More and more Americans want to get back to their “roots” and live self-sufficiently by growing their own fruits and vegetables, buying locally sourced meats, building their own rain barrels, or creating a straw bale garden. Farmers markets, composting, backyard beekeeping, small

flock/backyard poultry and food preservation are just a few of the best practices Extension could offer to this demographic. With the slightly younger age range of our followers, it is possible to tap into the “hipster” crowd and interest them in Extension resources. Mike may actually be married to Jennifer and thus she would share her content/links with him, as he may not be a direct fan of our page. However, our content would interest him in that it is free, helpful, and targeted.

CONTENT STRATEGIES


One of the things Extension has done for over 100 years is offer proven, research-based methods for all its program areas. The DIY crowd is pummeled daily with shady ways of growing your own vegetables,

creating “organic” pesticides, or dubious methods for canning your own food. Mythbusting is a way Extension could prove useful to this demographic.

Extension serves a similar purpose for the urban mother demographic. Our program areas cross a wide range of interests for them such as youth development programs (yoga for kids, camps, etc.) and financial literacy resources (saving for college, understanding credit scores, creating a home budget, etc.) along with healthy recipes, diabetic cooking classes, and shopping for a family on a budget.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture - Extension (UAEX)
Published by Kimberly Hurst Rowe [?] · May 10 ·

Eliminating moles with a foam mallet used to be a fun way to pass the time in the arcade, but those who have witnessed the destruction these little critters can cause in lawns and landscapes know it's no game. Mole control can be difficult to achieve without the right knowledge and proper tools. Check out our fact sheet on moles to learn more.



Controlling the Eastern Mole - Get the facts!
UAEX.EDU


6,431 people reached Boost Post

Penny Wilson, Helen Griffin and 15 others · 9 Comments · 42 Shares

Like Comment Share

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture - Extension (UAEX)
Published by Amy Cole [?] · March 6 ·

Warmer weather has been sneaking in here and there across the state already but spring will OFFICIALLY begin this month! That means it's time to put on those gardening gloves and dig in the dirt. Our planting guide gives you the lowdown on all the garden goodies you can plant in March.



9,760 people reached Boost Post

4 Comments · 103 Shares

Like Comment Share

9,760 People Reached

261 Reactions, Comments & Shares

128 Like	30 On Post	98 On Shares
3 Love	1 On Post	2 On Shares
1 Wow	0 On Post	1 On Shares
24 Comments	4 On Post	20 On Shares
106 Shares	103 On Post	3 On Shares
393 Post Clicks		
132 Photo Views	2 Link Clicks	259 Other Clicks

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	1 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Targeting their heartstrings

Hometown and state pride are hallmarks for the Extension Facebook audience. As evidence for this, posts with the outline or data about the state typically get shared 2-3 times as much as other types of posts and have a high level of engagement.

Targeting their tummies

Recipes are another strategy to target the mothers but also the DIY types. Including a recipe for canning fruits or vegetables would straddle both audiences' interests.

Targeting their wallets

Finally, who doesn't like FREE? Our classes and workshops are often low cost or free, another great way to feature content to budget-conscious audiences. The posts featuring our online or in-person classes that specify dates and times typically have a very high level of shares. The viewers, even if they aren't interested themselves, will tag a friend in the comments so they can help spread the word about our programming. Agents and specialists are also part of our audience and they too share our content on their own pages and with their followers.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture - Extension (UAEX)
 Published by Amy Cole [?] · April 14 · 🌐

It's "FREE-BEE" time! If you're interested in raising bees, sign up today for our free 3-part short course on introductory beekeeping from our own bee expert, Jon Z! Check out our website to learn more. <https://www.uaex.edu/.../special-p.../beekeeping/beeclasses.aspx>

23,246 people reached Boost Post

👍❤️ 57 26 Comments 210 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

23,246 People Reached

656 Reactions, Comments & Shares

289 👍 Like	51 On Post	238 On Shares
23 ❤️ Love	6 On Post	17 On Shares
1 😂 Haha	0 On Post	1 On Shares
1 😮 Wow	0 On Post	1 On Shares
124 Comments	31 On Post	93 On Shares
218 Shares	210 On Post	8 On Shares

1,192 Post Clicks

168 Photo Views	124 Link Clicks	900 Other Clicks ⓘ
---------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

15 Hide Post	2 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

EDITORIAL CALENDAR

The editorial calendar (shared in [Google calendar](#)) is shown below. Pink posts are the “Jennifer” content, green posts are more “Mike” related, and the yellow posts target a more general “everyone” topic. Utilizing the popularity of Instagram, I propose to have several of the “meme” type graphics post from Instagram to Facebook as Facebook’s algorithm prefers Instagram-native content in news feeds. Two of the dates include “national day” celebrations, fried chicken and vanilla ice cream. I will be gathering content for a “people of Extension” post to go out the first week or possibly second week of the month featuring an agent and specialist married couple who both work for Extension.

Early in the month the cover photo will change to a more “summery” scene. Possible imagery could include backyard chickens and gardens, two of the topics covered in the months’ posts. Two posts will go out on Thursdays for “Throwback Thursday” to remind the public of Extension’s century-old history in the state.

“Jennifer” posts will involve recipes, budgeting for a family, summer safety, and food preservation. “Mike” posts will include beehive pests, grafting tomatoes, planting guides for vegetables, backyard poultry, and dealing with nuisance wildlife on your property.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	30	Jul 1 COVER PHOTO change Summer post
	3 July gardening list - INFOGRAPHIC	4 Fourth of July Post - one post this day Independence Day	5 DIY worm composting fact sheet	6 Natl Fried Chicken Day - Oven Fried Chi	7 All about HONEY	8 Pink posts target the moms.
9 Yellow posts cover both audiences.	10 backyard poultry	11 Self compassion post- MEME link to wet	12 Tomatoes - grafting and growing	13 TBT - homesteading -	14 10 things to help stormwater	15 Keep heat out of the kitchen
16	17 Build your own Rain garden	18 Beehive pests and disorders	19 Honey vs sugar which is healthier	20 TBT - babies/canning baby food from 19	21 Picnic safety - Q&A type post	22 Nuisance wildlife
23 National vanilla ice cream day -recipe	24 Dealing with storks - MEME	25 Credit - info for young adults and parent	26 Emergency preparedness - power outage	27 Drought tolerant plants	28 Watermelon lemonade - GRAPHIC recip	29
30	31 Farmer's Market	Aug 1	2	3	4	5

CONTENT SAMPLES (INSTAGRAM TO SHARE TO FACEBOOK)

Below are the Instagram samples with corresponding dates for posting. These cannot be uploaded ahead of time to Facebook so I'm including them here for reference. They can also be found in the details of each noted post in the calendar.

Planting Guide

Basil
Pak Choi
Bok Choi
Cabbage
Irish Potatoes
Collards
Tomatoes
Southern Peas

Sweet Corn
Cucumbers
Pumpkins
Winter Squash
Summer Squash

<http://bit.ly/uaex-monthly-planting>

July 3rd gardening post for DIY persona:

Even in the July heat, it's not too late to get some tasty veggies in the ground! Start by planting basil, pak or bok choi, cabbage and potatoes and end the month by planting pumpkins and squash. Check out our monthly planting guide for full details. bit.ly/uaex-monthly-planting #gardening #veggies #Arkansas



Fourth of July Instagram post (all audiences)

Quote: "America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand." ~Harry Truman #fourthofjuly #Arkansas #independenceday #celebrate

In the 1930s, Arkansas Extension agents taught the "Live-at-Home" Program to help families become self-sufficient.



Text for July 13 post: (DIY persona targeted)

In this #TBT photo, Mrs. C.B. Marsh of Pangburn, White County, is prepared to live at home like hundreds of other farm people who followed the program in 1931 under County Extension Agent leadership. The program encouraged farmers to lessen their emphasis on commodities and increase the production of food, feedstuffs, and livestock products necessary for year-round family and farm consumption. As rural people became more self-sufficient, they would take surplus products to nearby towns to sell at "local markets" rather than growing for export. Officials argued that families wasted money importing agricultural goods that might have been produced at home. #preparedness #selfsufficient #homesteading #Arkansas #history

Food Preservation 1931

U of A DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System



Pictured above is one month's supply of purees and fruit juices to feed a baby. Home demonstration agents taught farm women in Arkansas how to feed their families for an entire month at a time. #TBT

Text for July 20th Instagram post:

In 1932, Extension agents offered training to mothers on how to puree and can their own baby food. This photo shows one month's supply of purees and fruit juices for a baby. Home demonstration agents (now Family and Consumer Sciences agents) were responsible for providing the training. #TBT #baby #budget (NOTE that I am repeating what's in the photo for accessibility reasons.)