

Fig. 1. Results of the survey indicating type of computer used by age group

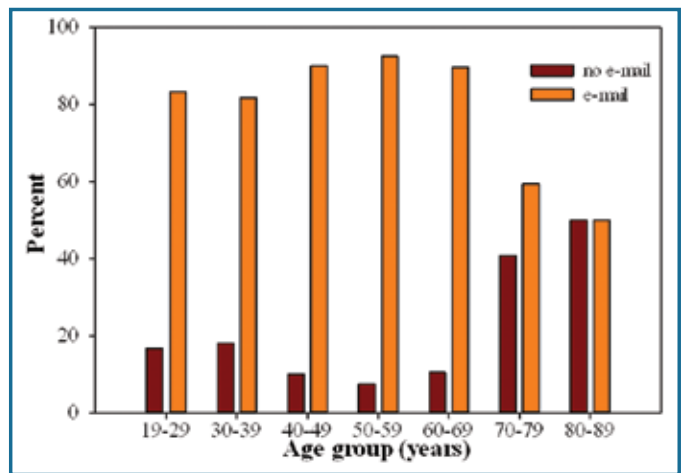


Fig. 2. Preference of regular postal mail or e-mail by age group

Communicating in the 21st Century

By Jamie D. Burrow and Megan Dewdney

Communication between and within a business and its clientele is vital for the success of the organization. In the 21st century, technology provides multiple forms of communication. There are cell phones with instant Internet access and/or texting capabilities, social media websites, and various mobile devices to stay in constant communication with the world. As individuals, we are more accessible to others than ever before. Since most people are more accessible, we wondered if and how the citrus industry is using the newest forms of communication.

A 13-question survey was distributed at grower events and online. Questions sought information about age; affiliation in the citrus industry; type of computer utilized; Internet, email and social media usage; mobile telephone type and usage. Of the 237 surveys completed, the median age of the survey participants was 56 and the majority of respondents were growers and grove managers.

When asked the type of computer

used most often, the youngest age group (19-29 years old) preferred to use laptops compared to the oldest age group (80-89 years old), who used desktops. The middle age groups were split nearly 50 percent between the PC laptop and PC desktop. A small percentage of the citrus industry personnel used Mac computers (Fig. 1). The most surprising outcome of our survey was to find that approximately 85 percent of the members of the oldest age group were computer users, with the majority preferring PC desktops. Our conclusion from this result was that if someone remained involved in the citrus industry until their later years, they were fully engaged and kept up with technological advances.

Several years ago, Extension agents moved from regular postal mail to electronic email to provide their clientele newsletters and program information. At the time there was concern that some clientele would no longer be adequately served. However, the vast majority of the industry today is willing to receive e-mail newsletters as compared to regular postal mail; therefore, the change has been successful for the vast

majority of Extension clientele. As further evidence of the switch of citrus industry personnel from postal mail to e-mail (Fig. 2), we found greater than 60 percent check their e-mail on a daily basis regardless of age (Fig. 3).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media websites are becoming increasingly popular for friends and family to share information and photos. Many businesses and organizations have also begun to incorporate social media websites into their marketing and communication with consumers and clientele. Extension programs also aim to serve clients; as such, a social media presence has been encouraged. In the survey, the citrus industry indicated a greater interest in Facebook® compared to Twitter and LinkedIn®. Facebook use was most common with the youngest generation of the citrus industry personnel (19-29 years old), but as an individual's age progressed, the usage of Facebook declined (Fig. 4). More than 70 percent of the citrus industry personnel had never used Twitter or LinkedIn.

The question remains: Is the citrus

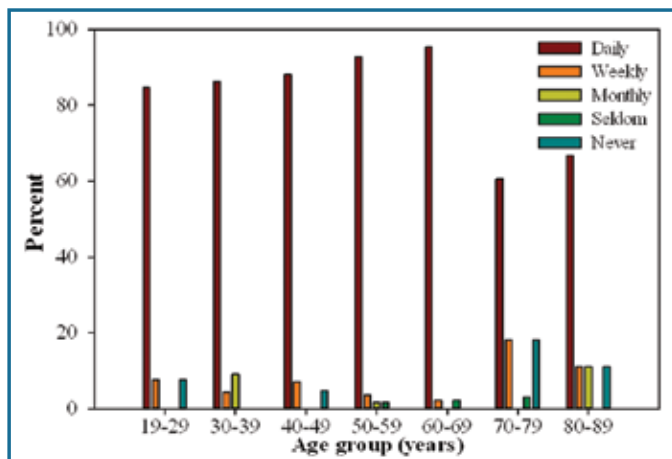


Fig. 3. Survey results for how often email is checked by age group

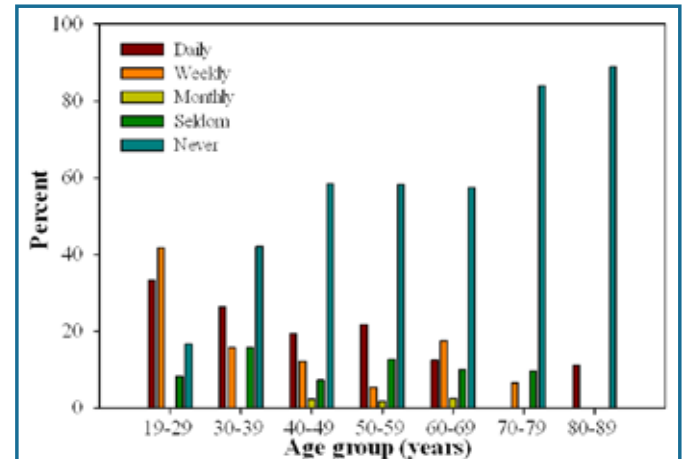


Fig. 4. The frequency of Facebook usage by age group

industry ready for social media websites as an additional form of communication from Extension services? Despite not having the answer to this question, the citrus Extension program has created a Facebook page titled, "UF IFAS Citrus Extension." If you have a Facebook account, we encourage you to "like" the page. If you do not have a Facebook account, you can create an account at www.facebook.com; otherwise, you will not have access to the citrus page. The page provides event reminders and photos from recent Extension activities. This Facebook site is intended to be an additional tool for the industry to use at its convenience and to enhance communication.

When the citrus community was asked if it would support the use of social media by the citrus Extension program, whether it used it daily or never, the indication was that the majority of all age groups would support social media usage from Extension (Figure 5). However, there was a significant minority who were still undecided about the use of social media.

In order for communication to be successful, Extension agents and their clientele must be using the same form of communication. It seems many

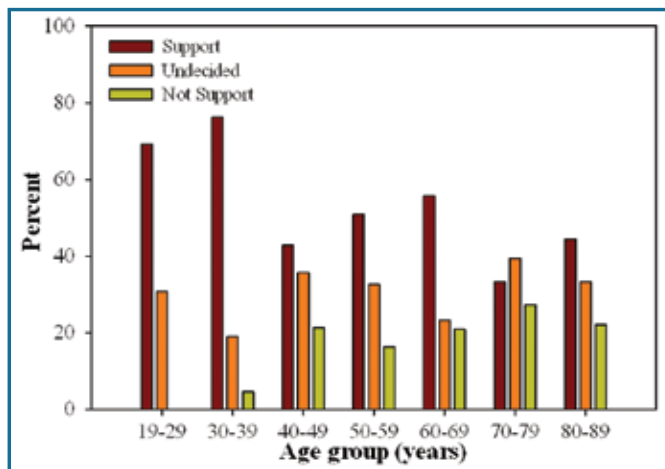


Figure 5. Support of social media by age group

citrus industry personnel may not be active on social media websites, but would support Extension if it had such sites. Clearly social media in Extension would be an additional tool for those who use social media websites, but it could not be the only source of communication. This trend may change over time as social media gains further popularity and younger, more computer savvy people join the industry.

TEXT MESSAGES

Cell phones seem to have become a necessity in the workforce today. Staying in communication with employees and clientele has become easier than ever before. Various phone types are

available, but smartphones have become popular with many people. We asked survey participants if they had texting capabilities and whether they are interested in receiving text messages for meeting and event reminders. The majority of all age groups were interested in receiving text messages and we are exploring how to implement text notifications to a large group.

SUMMARY

Overall, it appears the citrus industry is pleased with the communication methods Extension agents are currently using. E-mail is the preferred form of communication and social media websites would be supported, although many do not use them at this time. If Extension services were to begin sending text messages for meeting reminders, it seems the industry would be interested.

Jamie D. Burrow is the Extension coordinator for the citrus canker, black spot and HLB Extension education program with the University of Florida-IFAS, and Megan Dewdney is a University of Florida-IFAS assistant professor of plant pathology; both are at the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred.

Battle Greening With Stronger, Healthier Roots



Asset and Hydra-Hume can help your citrus trees build a stronger, healthier root system for a stronger defense against citrus greening.

Asset helps build a healthier, more vigorous root system with more extensive feeder roots. The organic acids in Hydra-Hume help sustain healthy root growth.

Together, Asset and Hydra-Hume can give you stronger, healthier roots for a stronger, healthier grove.

Contact your nearest Helena representative for more details.

Asset + Hydra-Hume

- Stronger, healthier root system
- Improved uptake potential of nutrients & soil pesticides
- Improved salt & drought tolerance
- Increased caliper & root growth
- Improved nutrient retention in soil
- Increased water holding ability
- Higher yield potential



People...
Products...
Knowledge...

Helena Chemical Company • 2405 N. 71st Street • Tampa, FL 33619 • 813-626-5121 • www.helenachemical.com

Always read and follow label directions. Asset, Hydra-Hume & People...Products...Knowledge... are registered trademarks of Helena Holding Company. © 2013 Helena Holding Company. To comply with varying state regulations, Hydra-Hume may be registered for specific purposes in certain states.