

Social media harness racing ownership recruitment initiative launched

from Converseon

New York, NY --- The Harness Racing Social Media Initiative, in partnership with the U.S. Trotting Association and key partners, today announced the launch of a new marketing campaign to help recruit new owners into the sport.

The "Ownership Experience" initiative is designed to target potential owners in key regions through online media targeting based on location, income and interests across multiple media channels. Initially the channel will include Google, Facebook and Twitter but is expected to expand over time to test other media, including the WSJ.com, Smart Money and select Thoroughbred magazines.

The campaign encourages potential owners to sign up for an "ownership" brochure with specific information on the benefits of harness racing ownership at <http://owner.harnessracingfanzone.com/ownership-opportunity>.

The most qualified prospective owners will eventually also have the chance to be invited to exclusive "Ownership Experience" meetings conducted at select participating tracks. The campaign appeals to all levels of ownership, ranging from low-cost, limited risk "fractional ownership" offerings to larger investments.

In conjunction with the USTA, a limited "fractional ownership" offering is being tested at both The Meadows and Scioto Downs where new owners can invest a nominal amount for a partial, percentage ownership in a racehorse. Based on the success of the effort, the concept is expected to be rolled out more broadly with the goal of making harness racing ownership more accessible and affordable to the general public.

The campaign is being fully integrated with other social media marketing activities, including the www.harnessracingfanzone.com and through signage, video and other supporting marketing materials and activities at key tracks. Profiles of current owners will increasingly be featured describing their experiences as owners and why they believe others should also get involved in the sport.

The campaign will initially run through June 30, 2015 to determine best performing channels and approaches before broader expansion in key regions, such as Pennsylvania, where the Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association has already allocated some supporting funds.

"Being an owner of a racehorse is not only prestigious, but also offers up great experiences for the entire family," said Rob Key, CEO of Converseon, which is heading up the effort with the USTA. "With horses racing for more money than ever -- more than \$400 million in 2015 -- never has there been a better time for potential owners to get involved. It's important we help make the experience of ownership as compelling as possible, because whether you own one percent of a racehorse or a group of expensive stakes horses, the excitement and ability to participate in the thrill of the winner's circle is second to none."

"This important effort builds on all the social media efforts to date and is the initial step in addressing a key issue of focus for us -- the decline in owners and foals over the last several years," said Mike Tanner, executive vice president and CEO of the USTA. "This will be a test, learn and expand approach working in partnership with various tracks and horsemen's groups. We look forward to expanding this program over time to spread the word about all the benefits of harness horse ownership. Clearly, recruiting new owners is not only critically important for the future of the sport, it benefits everyone involved in the industry."

About the Harness Racing Social Media Initiative

The Harness Racing Social Media Initiative is a partnership between the U.S. Trotting Association, the social media consultancy, Converseon, and key industry groups to help drive marketing innovation and engagement with current and new fans for the sport. The initiative's mission is to help support key racetracks, industry groups and help provide foundational support and a common, "best practice" framework by leveraging social technologies, platforms and strategies to help positively brand the sport of harness racing and generate greater awareness, visibility and engagement with a new generation of fans and owners.