

Taking Marketing to New Levels

Former web and advertising coordinator returns to lead API efforts.

by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

The registered Angus breed excites Sara Reardon, who took the helm as API general manager in May 2017.

“People who aren’t even in the business know what Angus stands for,” she says. “I remember when Nathan, a project manager with an agency in New York City, just couldn’t believe I was taking this job. He and I had worked together on several projects for my previous employer. He was like, ‘You’re going to work for Angus?’ Then I asked him what the word ‘Angus’ meant to him. He thought a minute, then said, ‘Well, quality. Great burgers. Delicious beef.’”

“I told Nathan, *‘That’s it! That’s exactly why I’m taking the job!’*” Reardon recalls, smiling. “*That’s why Angus as a breed and brand is super exciting to me. We have a level of loyalty and advocacy that’s strong. All people, in all walks of life, know and love Angus.*”

Devoted to livestock

Cattle and horses have always been a big part of Reardon’s life.

“My parents managed a small feedlot in Skidmore, Missouri,” she says. “On the side, we also had a cow-calf operation, usually some good black cows and a few Charolais. As a family, we worked the cattle and checked pens together.”



Richard and Linda Schafer bought Reardon her first horse at age 6. Compared to the family’s previous horses, Missy Mae Bar far exceeded their expectations, and they wanted more just like her — or better. So why not breed their own horses?

“First Dad bought a stallion by Doc Clabber, who was a son of Doc Bar (American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame 1993 inductee) and 30 head of broodmares,” Reardon says. “Then we drove to a dispersal sale in Midland, Texas, and purchased Colonel Dickens, the son of Colonel Freckles (American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame 2004 inductee). We had him trained for cutting, where he gained his NCHA COA (National Cutting Horse Association Certificate of Ability). Later, we used him to work at home as a sire and at the feedlot.”

Thus began Schafer Quarter Horses, a family-owned company that grew rapidly and is still in business. After closing the feedlot, the Schafers focused on breeding, training and showing horses.

“During my high school years in the 1990s, I marketed our horses online and built a website for us,” Reardon says. “I also selected and bought mares to breed to Colonel Dickens. Then I sold the colts through online classifieds and our website. I understood the impact

of genetics and how to leverage the Internet to market our animals. I then won awards for equine management through the FFA.”

Soon friends asked Reardon for help with brokering their horses. They also wanted their own websites.

“So I built and updated websites to make extra money while I was going to college,” Reardon says. “But I was getting swamped with work, so I hired a web developer to design a content management system (CMS). That way, horse breeders could update their own websites.”

The new system did free up time for Reardon, who by then was attending Northwest Missouri State University (NMSU) and working full-time as the university’s event coordinator. In 2010, she earned a bachelor’s degree in advertising with a digital emphasis from NMSU.

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— Sara Reardon



Meanwhile, Reardon still bred and sold horses.

“At a sale, I met Rich Masoner, then API’s web services manager,” she says. “From him, I learned the basics about registered cattle and how their bloodlines attributed to performance. It was similar to the horse market, but it seemed harder to differentiate individual animals and breeding programs. All of the animals, at that point, seemed so similar. I began to see how Angus producers leveraged value and branding efforts to market their animals and command higher prices in the auction environment. That was, and still is, super exciting to me.”

Professional start

Best of all, Masoner gave her a job. In April 2006, Reardon joined API as a web coordinator. She later assumed additional duties as an advertising coordinator. For seven years, she worked with more than 450 Angus clients to create integrated marketing campaigns. She also introduced new advertising systems and designed in-house advertising that led to three Livestock Publication Council (LPC) awards.

In April 2013, Reardon joined Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc. — a global pharmaceutical company — as the first digital marketing specialist globally for the cattle team in Saint Joseph, Mo. In 2016, she was promoted to a senior digital

marketing specialist that supported the cattle, equine, swine, pet, distribution and commercial business units.

“I focused on building relationships,” she says. “During my tenure with the cattle team, I grew their Facebook audience from 183 fans to 32,000-plus engaged fans. I also grew the company’s ‘BIVI Prevention Works’ YouTube channel from five subscribers to more than 1,200 subscribers with no resources or budget — purely by optimization efforts.

“My most important contribution was influencing the shift in mindset about digital marketing,” she continues. “This included developing strategies that drove results from the brands and working to develop an overarching U.S. digital strategy and contributing to the global digital strategy.”

Always, Reardon’s actions were powered by Boehringer Ingelheim’s philosophy of solving problems for customers instead of selling a product.

“I could see producers changing their behavior and how they were managing their herds based on what we were doing as a company by solving problems,” Reardon says. “We were acting as a partner rather than an order taker. Their success was our success. That’s when I really began to understand that the better you educate and empower people, the more you help them to be successful

and efficient. It’s far more rewarding than selling a widget.”

Coming back

In May 2017, Reardon — who’s married and has one daughter, Ruby — accepted a new position as API general manager.

“I understood API and its role with the Association, but also what could make it a better partner with producers. It’s so exciting to come back,” she says. “I don’t have to massage traditional media tactics into a pharmaceutical execution like I did in my previous job. Plus, it’s an agile organization. I can walk right next door or across the building and solve problems quickly.”

“I collect eyeballs,” she continues. “I love to get everyone’s eyes on whatever we’re putting out there. I love analytics and reaching people using multiple media channels to orchestrate an experience and emotional connection to a brand. I helped and watched an Angus producer who, using an integrated sales campaign every year, grew his annual gross sales from \$50,000 in 2007 to \$1.2 million in 2014.”

“I want to scale that kind of success across Angus,” Reardon says. “We have the elements here already at API, and we’re going to do it!” [AJ](#)

Editor’s Note: Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a freelance writer from Blanco, Texas.