

MARKETING MATTERS

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Discovering your brand identity

Great breeding programs draw great customers, but how do we communicate the hard work and forethought placed into developing excellent genetics to the marketplace? The answer begins with developing a clear vision of your brand identity as a breeder.

Your brand as a breeder is the collection of all the things that make you and your program unique. It is your history, your experience, your family, your breeding philosophies and what you offer the marketplace that is not easily replicated.

Your brand identity is your very core, that list of priorities that you hold highest as you make decisions which will affect your customers' herds for years to come. It is your road map to create the cattle and genetics that will serve the needs of your customers. Your brand identity is what gets you out of bed each morning, and what you are most proud of when each day of hard work is done.

However, brand identity doesn't stop there — it is also outward-facing. The importance of defining what makes your program unique, is the ability to clearly communicate those benefits and advantages to a prospective customer.

These competitive advantages allow us to take a proactive approach to marketing our programs, elevating our genetics from a commodity to a needed investment with long-reaching upside potential for profit and advancement. When clearly thought through and communicated, brand identity becomes how existing

and potential customers view your program. That perception sets the stage for ultimate marketing success.

Getting started

To begin, simply write down the most important things to you as a breeder and how you have accomplished these goals in your program. Consider surveying loyal customers to better understand what you have done to earn their business.

From this point, envision future challenges that your customers may face. Will your current vision and mission continue to serve their needs? Building upon your existing core values while leaving room for future improvements will allow you to grow without sacrificing the bedrock ideals that have created success to this point. The key goal of every program is to attract new customers, while reaffirming the existing customer base. This is a multifaceted approach which includes advertising, daily customer interactions, and possibly even influences future breeding decisions.

What's your message?

The next step is to craft your message. Are your messages clear, concise and simple, and do they quickly and thoroughly communicate

your brand identity? Do they provide clear-cut reasons why a prospective customer should invest their hard-earned dollars in your program? Once it can be shown your genetics align with customer wants and needs as beef producers, you can better invest marketing dollars.

Consistency of your brand identity remains key in today's marketplace. In addition to core messages, it's important to keep a consistent look to your message. Colors, design style, logo and imagery all make a difference. Each time a customer views your messages, they should instantly recognize your brand. In today's highly connected world, recognizing key brand elements and messages allows us to get the most value for customer touchpoints. This brand recognition creates the positive response sought after in influencing customers' purchasing decisions.

The new year is the perfect time to remember why we chose to be in this great business and how we will build upon our past successes to create more opportunities for our program.

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