

by Julie Mais
Editor



The elephant

Imagine you walk into a room — it's an event with your friends and family. Some are standing with refreshments in hand. Others are seated around in cozy corners looking to be in deep conversation. You join a small group to hear the latest news and engaging story.

Then, out of the corner of your eye, you see a big gray mass. It moves slowly, and as it turns you notice how it's starting to fill up the room. The massive feet, the flopping ears, the long trunk — it doesn't belong here. How did you miss it before? Can no one else see it? Or, are they ignoring the proverbial “elephant in the room”?

I'll admit, it's natural for me to be one of those trying to continue their conversation pretending like I'm not getting nudged, or nearly trampled, by something I don't want to address.

However, as Angus producers, you haven't grown Angus to be the leading beef breed in the world by ignoring elephants.

From conversations of the family business around the dinner table to discussing the industry's external challenges and pressures, how we respond to the elephant in the room is a test of leadership.

Tough conversations

In this issue of the *Angus Journal*, we tackle just some of the “Tough Conversations” breeders are facing. Yet, what's it like to actually have

some of those conversations? Because I'm not the expert, let me share a few things I learned on the topic from *Inc.* on how to turn a potentially negative and uncomfortable situation into something positive.

1. Sleep on it. Take some time to play out the conversation in your mind.


2. Remove emotion from the moment, but not your words. Have you ever said something you didn't mean when emotions were running high? Plan your words ahead of the conversation so you can communicate your emotion without getting emotional.

3. Don't assume the worst. If you want positive change, approach the topic in a positive way and don't assume the worst-case scenario.

4. Separate the person from the situation. “Just because someone disagrees with you doesn't mean you don't like them. And just because someone aligns with your philosophies doesn't mean you

like their character.” Learning to separate people from the situation can help you find solutions.

In another *Inc.* article Katie Burke, chief people officer for Hubspot, wrote, “Difficult conversations matter. They allow you to navigate through the good times and bad in everyday business, and it makes you stronger as an individual, a team and as a whole company.”

I think we can replace “company” with “industry” here, because when we can have these tough conversations where opinions are shared, dissenting views are considered, new ideas are brought forth, there's no longer room for the elephant. 

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie".

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