

Selling is Easier if You Know What People Want

The key to selling, someone once said, is to find out what people want then help them get it. It's a good rule for those of us in the registered Angus business.

I received a telephone call the other day from a man who was thinking about getting into the Angus business. He wanted to know what kind of cattle he should raise. Someone who knows more about beef cattle than I do might have quoted him EPDs, ratios and bull test results. Others would have informed him about the ROV program and told him about this year's winners. Others, no doubt, would have talked to him about hip height or pelvic measurements, or a number of other things.

Looking at his problem from a marketing standpoint I told him to take a hard look at the area where he intends to breed and market cattle: to do a little market research. Before buying his first registered Angus cattle the man needed to find out what kind of cattle potential bull customers use, need and want. With this information in hand it would be fairly easy to purchase foundation stock that would produce offspring which would satisfy customers.

Most everyone would agree that when starting a business, a person should start at the beginning. But for too many people starting at the beginning means deciding where to buy cattle, instead of first answering the question of what kind of cattle would best satisfy the potential customers in their market area.

The registered cattle business may be the only business in the world where a majority of people produce a product and then search for a market. In most other businesses the process is reversed. Someone sees a potential market for a product or service then builds a business to fill it.

Whether you are just getting started in the Angus business or are a veteran breeder who is deciding what bulls to buy or semen to use for the spring breeding season, it will pay you to do some market research. Talk to your present customers. Ask them frankly what they think of your bulls and how they would like to see them

improved. Give them a hand in designing the product they will be using. Also talk to cattle producers who would be good customers for your cattle. Find out what it would take to get their business. Let them tell you if they need more milk, more or less mature size, more calving ease or whatever.

You don't have to bluntly ask why they aren't buying from you. Instead stop by their place, even make an appointment. Have them show you their cow herd. Most cattle producers are flattered by a request to look at their cows. In the process of looking and talking you'll get a good idea of what the person needs and wants.

There are other people in your market area who can help you. People like farm loan officers, livestock Extension specialists, cattle order buyers or vocational agricultural instructors. These people are often exposed to a wide cross section of the beef cattle industry in their part of the world. They have a good general idea of what commercial producers in the area need and want.

Once you have collected this basic

market data only then is it time to go and talk to the experts in the Angus industry. These are the people who can quote you the EPDs on every valuable bull in the business and who know which sires are popular and why. There are a lot of people who can direct you to the sires that have the genetics to put a little more growth in your bulls without adversely affecting calving ease if that's what you want. They can help you find the bull that is popular and also will add a little more marbling or loin eye area to the calves he sires if your research shows that this will improve your sales.

No one bull that can correct all the problems in a herd of cattle. There never was one, and probably never will be. Even if he existed in Wyoming, he probably wouldn't cut the mustard in Mississippi.

So before you invest in a bull, in a batch of semen or in a new herd of cows, do a little market research. Find out what the other person wants to buy. It will make selling your cattle a heck of a lot easier.

