

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



We need to be our own disruptor

*I loved the presentation at the Angus Convention in Reno, Nev.,
by Terry Jones, founder of Travelocity.*

I suspect like others in the room that morning, my head was spinning a little when he was done.

Terry talked about “industry disruptors,” and it’s a topic I enjoy studying.

The business book section is filled with stories of ideas, technologies and people who turned traditional industries on their ear. While we now have a fancy term for it, the concept certainly isn’t new. Henry Ford disrupted the horse-drawn carriage industry; and candlemakers, I’m sure, felt disrupted by Thomas Edison’s light bulb.

In our high-tech modern-day world, disruption can be seen most everywhere. The hotel industry has been disrupted by Airbnb, taxi cabs by Uber and Lyft, the music industry by iTunes, shopping malls by Amazon and the movie industry by Netflix — just to name a few.

The agricultural industry is also being disrupted and positioned for significant disruption in the coming decade. The flow of venture capital funding into ag-focused startup companies is proof.

CNBC ranked Indigo Ag as the top industry disruptor in 2019. Using artificial intelligence and machine learning, Indigo Ag promises to revolutionize food production and they’ve raised billions of dollars to fund that mission. Alternative

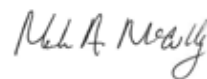
protein companies like Impossible Foods and Memphis Meats have also put billions of dollars in their war chests to fund their production and marketing of plant-based and lab-grown “meat,” respectively.

Angus innovation

Fortune 500 companies aren’t the only disruptors. It’s alive and well right here in our Angus business, and it always has been. Disruption has occurred with artificial insemination (AI), performance testing and branded beef; and continues today with genomic testing, *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), supply chain coordination, online marketing and digital advertising. Members of the American Angus Association have always had an eye for the future and are not afraid to take risks when a better way or a totally new path is identified.

In economics class, we are taught that companies and industries have life cycles — start-up, growth, consolidation, maturity and decline. To fend off “decline,” companies or industries must reinvent themselves or innovate how business is done. I don’t believe a breed association is insulated from these life-cycle stages. Association members and the breed itself certainly are not. Failure to recognize this puts us at risk of being Encyclopedia Britannica when the world is searching Google.

Some may wring their hands and become consumed with worry about such disruptions. I hope that’s not you. I hope you, like me, see incredible opportunity in our future. As Terry Jones pointed out, disruption and innovation are just two sides of the same coin. Disruption is a threat. Innovation is an opportunity. I suppose the only difference between the two views is who is embracing change. I look forward to being the disruptor. **AJ**



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