

MARKETING

in a Digital World

Three experts share their top tips for promoting your genetics online.

by Katrina Huffstutler



Update the website, write a Facebook post, shoot video of sale bulls. Just three more things on your already too long to do list? Digital marketing may feel daunting, but three professionals say not only is it worth it, but it doesn't have to be hard or expensive. Read on for their advice on making the most of the time and budget you have.

A place in the web

As web team lead for Angus Media, Andy Blumer knows many cattlemen think or have been told (perhaps by a younger relative) they need a website. Others have one but haven't updated it since it went live in 2003.

"I think there's a lot of information out there, covering a lot of different products, and it starts to get really confusing if you're not familiar with it," Blumer says. "You start looking at prices and since they're all over the place, it's pretty easy to assume you can't afford it. More than anything, though, we hear from people who say they just don't know where to start. It's not as much the price as not knowing what to do."

The best way to get started? Just pick up the phone and ask for help. Of course, Blumer hopes cattlemen will call Angus Media, but knows there are many good companies out there.

"You can find websites that walk you through their program online," he says. "But that still takes some level of knowledge with the product you're working with. There's something to be said about being able to pick up the phone and talk to a person who can help you do these things, make suggestions and guide you to the product you need for your operation."

He says it's important for cattlemen to think about what they want to share about their operation before designing or updating a website. What's the purpose? What are the goals? It's then that Blumer can tell the producer what he needs

from them to proceed.

When it comes to content, not just any photo or video will do, and that's why it's important to get help and do your research. But as a general guide, Blumer recommends large, high-quality photos that will look good on any size device. In other words, don't pull pictures off Facebook and send them to your web designer — get the originals.

Once the page is complete, that doesn't mean the job is done, though, Blumer says.

"My advice is to always update," he explains. "Do it as often as possible, and as often as your budget will allow."

Not only does fresh content give your potential customers a reason to come back, it helps with search engine optimization, too, which means more customers will find you.

That ability to update, Blumer says, is web's greatest advantage over print pieces, though those should be part of a business's portfolio, too.

"Print comes out, and then what's on the page is on the page for the entire life cycle of that piece. We're talking years, decades," he says. "What's nice about a website is if something changes after the printed piece is published, you can change it online. You can have relevant, up-to-date information online at all times, which is handy for a customer."

Getting social

With more than 2 billion social media users around the globe, there's no doubt it's the place to be if you have a product or service to sell. But how?

Katy Kemp, who works in brand strategy at Cultivate Agency in addition to her role in the family Angus operation, says it's a common misconception that social media is different from other forms of communication. It's not necessarily different — it's just using a different platform.

"It's the same as if your customers walk through

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— Katy Kemp

your gate,” she says. “You would greet them and give them a tour and show them what you do. Social media allows you to share that same message, it's just in a digital platform.”

She says not having a presence on social media can say just as much as having one.

“If you're not on social media, it's almost the same as not having a phone number, or not having a basic website,” Kemp explains. “They either don't know you exist — or worse, if they've heard of you but can't find you, they wonder, ‘Why aren't they there? What aren't they sharing content?’”

Much like Blumer, Kemp's first tip is to know what you want to talk about. She says it's important with social media to not just consider what you want to push, but what the audience wants to hear. The good news? You'll figure it out quickly, if you don't know yet.

“You'll get that feedback instantaneously as people gravitate to likes, comments, have engagements. That's your cue right there. This is the type of content that my audience is interested in,” Kemp says.

It's also important to remember social media is conversational and a two-way street.

“There are a lot of brands out there that push content and expect their followership to share, like, comment and bring that engagement back, but they don't do any reciprocating,” Kemp says. “They don't go back and like the comments. They don't answer questions. They don't reply to messages. Or they

leave messages in their inbox for two or three days before they get around to them.”

She tells busy ranchers there are plenty of ways to have a social media presence without investing too much time. One of her favorite tips is “capture now, post later.”

“During the day, just take your phone out and capture some pictures,” Kemp says. “You don't have to stop and write the post right from there, but if you've added to your collection of material. Then, when you have five or 10 minutes later, you can work on writing out what you want to say to go with that and post.”

Lights, camera, action

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it still can't tell the whole story. It can't show how a bull moves, for one. And while there may be no true replacement for an in-person ranch visit, a good quality video comes close.

Brett Spader, Angus Sales TV Lead, says video is not a substitute for, but rather an addition to, an existing marketing plan. It's a next step for those already advertising in magazines and managing their presence on a website and/or social media.

“Video is a very powerful tool,” he says. “It has an interactive nature, which is so important as we market to new potential buyers and communicate to existing buyers. It truly allows us to engage our customers in a new way.”

Spader says with video marketing, it's important to think ahead. Planning the footage you'll need, when it should be shot, how it interacts with other media





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types and how viewers can access it is key.

“You want to be able to allow plenty of time, especially if you’re doing the work yourself,” he says.

“You don’t want to get in a position where you’re rushed. The key to successfully utilizing video to the fullest extent is being able to deliver the right messages and subject matter to those potential buyers when they are ready to make a decision.”

Then it’s time to decide whether it will be a do-it-yourself project, contracted out to a pro, or some combination of the two. For example, Angus Media will handle the entire project, or can just edit video shot by the client.

Spader says when contracting the job out, it’s vital to choose carefully — someone with industry knowledge is essential.

“When it comes to the seedstock industry, there’s some very specific things that buyers seek. It’s our job at Angus Media to bring our industry understanding to each project and pair it with the individual goals of each seedstock client in order to represent their breeding program to its fullest extent,” he explains. “Assisting in marketing seedstock is such an important job. This really is a total snapshot of many years’ worth of work and planning. And, many times, buyers will make their purchase decisions based upon this imagery.”

He says the person who shoots your video should understand maximizing pen layout, lighting, animal movement, conformation and communicating how to position cattle to get the most eye-appealing

footage. It’s important to get it right the first time, Spader says, because there may not be a second chance at a first impression.



“The footage captured on video day has a wide-reaching and lasting impact for your buying base,” he says. “Your videos are many times the key deciding factor which delivers all your advertising touch-points for a potential customer.”

It’s also important cattle are alert but have a calm demeanor and are striding out correctly.

“We’re there to show that animal in the best light possible,” he says. “And sometimes it takes someone with a lifetime of experience in the cattle industry to understand what that looks like.”

But even the best video — or website or Instagram post — can’t stand alone.

“Digital, itself, is an amplifier for the other things that we do,” Spader says. “It amplifies the things that we do in print. It also amplifies the things that we do in one-on-one relationships. It doesn’t replace either. We don’t want it to. But digital allows you to reach so many more people in an instant and creates a conduit for all these different pieces to tie your plan and efforts together.” [A](#)

Editor’s note: Katrina Huffstutler is a freelance writer from Electra, Texas.