

# Planning your

# PATHWAY

*Marketing balance takes on a three-pronged approach to reach customers with the right message the right way.*

*by Julie Mais, editor*

“How do we get full utility for every dollar and every minute spent when marketing your program?” asked Angus Media President Brett Spader of the audience during Angus University, sponsored by Zoetis, hosted at the Angus Convention in Reno, Nev., this past November. “Your marketing dollars and your time are both very precious, because when wisely invested, they can generate huge upside return.”

Maximizing money and time all starts with understanding your seedstock operation’s brand, your customers and the best ways to reach them with a targeted message. Then, it’s time to create your plan.



## Maximizing value

Spader challenged seedstock breeders to think beyond the few months leading up to the sale date. In fact, he suggested a marketing plan should begin at least a year out from payday.

“There’s truly never an off-season as we start to do customer and potential customer outreach,” he said.

Spader encouraged a three-pronged approach — marketing balance — when generating a plan.

“Not only do we want to cast that wide net, so that we capture everyone’s interest and attention, but we want to guide them through a journey,” he said. “We want to tailor some of our messaging depending on what customers are looking for and how they want to receive it, as well as where we’re at in the process, the timing, in relation to sale day.”

Spader said marketing a seedstock program is like the construction of a three-legged stool — a balance of three media types in an integrated plan — the only way to provide a sturdy seat.

“When we shorten one of those legs, our stool’s a little shorter than it was,” he described. “Worse yet, we may fall off.”

How is marketing balance developed? Spader said that while there is not a cookie-cutter approach for all operations, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of print, digital and social media will help breeders begin to develop a plan.



## Print

Traditional media — print — is foundational to a marketing plan, according to Spader. “Angus breeders are still making decisions based on print,” he said.

Speaking to the benefits of print, Spader asked the audience if they’ve received a wedding invitation lately. “Was it digital? No,” he said. “On the most important day of your life, when you’re requesting someone’s presence, that’s where print comes in. When you want to control the tone of your message in a very positive light, that’s where print shines.”

Print also boasts a long shelf life when compared to digital media options. “People tend to keep print pieces around, and so they have the ability to resurface and be enjoyed over again,” Spader said.

Print exudes loyalty, he added, and “is received best when paired with trusted information.”

However, a familiar weakness in print media is the higher cost per person reached. “Also in terms of challenges for print is it does take longer to create,” he said. Planning for development of content, production and mailing takes more forethought.



## Digital

Turning the page to an interactive story-telling platform — websites, videos and emails — is where digital media excels.

“Thinking about websites, sale cattle videos, videos to tell your story and customized emails, digital is absolutely more interactive,” Spader said.

A quicker turnaround time along with detailed analytics gives digital the upper hand in reaching a more targeted audience.

“You can utilize some digital applications to fine-tune demographics to determine and deliver your message,” he said. “It’s also easy to reach a larger group of people very quickly. With one mouse click, we can be in everyone’s inbox.”

With the lower cost-per-person reach, Spader said digital partners well with print to provide additional information on a deeper level through means such as websites, online sale books and videos.

In contrast to print, digital media has a shorter shelf life. “We don’t have as much ability to resurface that message,” Spader said.

Spader added there tends to be a little less loyalty. “Folks actually invest to receive the *Angus Journal* every year, whereas with websites we have this understanding that this is free information.”



## Social media

Social media has changed the marketing landscape in the past 10 years. “It’s almost been a bit disruptive in some ways; but just like with digital, I would encourage people to view it as a supplement [to print and digital],” Spader said.

Social media can be a low-cost option — essentially free. Speaking to the most popular platform among Angus breeders, Facebook, Spader

said posts can be “boosted” for a fee. “Boosting a post” means paying to have a post show up on a certain audience’s feed.

“This can potentially be a great return on our time value,” he said. “However, if you’re going to do social media correctly, be prepared to make an investment of time.”

Social media offers the high probability of messaging to be shared. “If we put the right messaging out, it has the potential to be exponentially shared,” Spader said.

Similar to digital platforms, social media provides the ability to target a specific audience. “You get that laser focus, knowing that it may differentiate the message that we put out there,” Spader said.

Social media is also highly interactive and offers high engagement through the ability to comment, like and share information.

“Through videos hosted on Facebook, we can truly bring those breeding philosophies to life, and to tell our story in a very interactive format,” he said.

Facebook also offers analytics to help tailor messaging and tactic.

Social media requires constant monitoring and management, Spader said. “Websites can deliver information at a very deep level, and we utilize social media to tap folks on the shoulder and say the quick hello,” he explained. “We never want to dead-end a post. We want to take them through your pathway, and direct them to more information about why they might want to do business with you.”

As the Angus seedstock industry continues to evolve, so does the marketing of Angus genetics to customers. Spader said, “It comes down to just best understanding strengths of traditional media we have utilized, and we know have worked for years, and start to counterbalance that with non-traditional, or new media approaches.” **AJ**