

by Mark McCully  
CEO, American Angus Association



## Adapt or die

*I was recently asked to speak on an academic symposium and was given the topic of, “How will the purebred association adapt to a changing beef industry?” The optimism that breed associations will adapt is encouraging, since adaptation is, after all, a choice for any business or organization.*

As I planned for my presentation, I thought of one of my all-time favorite movies, “Moneyball.” While I think there are similarities between the seedstock business and the story of how baseball analytics came to be, there is a great line in the movie I think about often. When the veteran baseball scout questions the young general manager’s new techniques, the GM gives him a challenge — “adapt or die.”

That ultimatum probably lands a little sharp with some, but I do believe it is a pretty true statement. I think we can look back upon our history of the American Angus Association and see countless examples of leaders who recognized the need to adapt to survive. Their foresight and vision is why we enjoy prosperity today as a breed.

There are many recent examples highlighting our ability to adapt. We have seen the numerous benefits that have come by adapting to genomic technology. The rate of adoption with Angus breeders is impressive, and our selection tools have never been more powerful. Our Angus Media business continues to adapt with new digital platforms while still delivering the most powerful print publications in the business. Also, efforts to grow demand for the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB) brand

have evolved to fit the dynamic foodservice and retail business.

## Delivering value

In the end, I think the answer to how purebred associations adapt in the future really boils down to being relevant and delivering value. Successful associations will balance diverse member needs while staying committed to commercial industry significance. To stay relevant, there will need to be a willingness to embrace change and probably adopt some disruptive technologies like gene editing. (Remember artificial insemination (AI) was at one time a controversial and disruptive technology.) Purebred associations will not be the only game in town when it comes to genetic evaluation, so maintaining access to significant amounts of data will be vital for industry relevance.


Keeping the commercial user of their genetics as a priority, successful associations of the future will deliver selection tools that allow for profitable beef production and biological balance across different environments and breeding objectives. Associations will need to help their seedstock members offer marketing assistance and supply chain integration opportunities to their commercial customers.

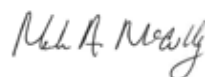
Through these and other value-added and branded programs adapted to changing consumer preferences, pull-through demand will be created for their members.

I think breed associations have a significant role to play in producer education, and they will adapt by offering educational solutions in new and innovative ways. Lastly, associations will have to adapt to a changing landscape around research.

While our land-grant universities will continue to be an incredibly important part of genetic research, associations will need to invest in their own research and be a driver for the improvement of their breed.

With these things in mind, I am incredibly optimistic about the position of the American Angus Association and its future relevance to its members and the beef industry.

We will continue to guard against complacency, stay nimble, look for opportunities to get better and embrace the mindset of change like generations of Angus breeders have done before. 



[mmccully@angus.org](mailto:mmccully@angus.org)

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3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997; phone: 816-383-5100; fax: 816-233-9703  
Office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central); home page: www.angus.org

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