

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



On mission

Mission statements often get a bad rap. For years, business and leadership gurus wrote books, delivered messages and gave speeches about how writing a few words would magically guide your business to the front of the pack.

Companies spent weeks crafting extensive and complicated mission statements and promptly forgot about them. Quite frankly, I can't get behind that kind of thought process, either.

What I do think is valuable is a mission statement created with intention and purpose — one that aligns with the direction of the organization and is front-of-mind daily for employees. It articulates why you exist and serves as a compass to guide all decisions.

If I asked a large group of members the purpose and mission of the Association, I'm sure I would get a variety of answers, reflecting our diverse membership and the importance different members put on individual programs and services of the Association and its entities.

When I consider the Association's purpose, I start with our organizational Charter. Per that guiding document, the purpose is to 1) Maintain breed purity; 2) Publish pedigrees, information and data to promote the breed; and 3) Conduct any other acts that best promote the interests of the breed.

The first two are relatively straightforward, but I think the third point reflects the wisdom of those Angus leaders who crafted the document. They knew they couldn't possibly predict the activities required of the Association in the future.

An organizational Charter is a more legal definition of purpose and typically gets translated into a mission statement. A mission is a more clear and compelling statement that communicates that purpose, both internally and externally.

While I doubt most cattlemen have a mission statement written down (though I know many that do), I am pretty sure those in agriculture inherently know their mission.

It goes something like this: To produce food by stewarding the land and animals and maintaining a way of life for the current and future generations of our family.

For an organization or group of employees, sometimes that mission isn't so obvious. Understanding the importance of having a clearly stated purpose, the Board and staff recently reviewed and revised the mission statement of the Association to make it more concise and applicable to today's industry:


To provide programs, resources and leadership that improve and promote the Angus breed, enhance the livelihoods of family farmers and ranchers, and exceed consumers' expectations.

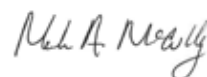
The first portion of the statement isn't much different from the previous version and speaks to the services we provide. The former mission didn't outline who the

organization served, and therefore "enhance the livelihoods of family farmers and ranchers" was added.

This organization exists to help keep independent producers operating independently. In an ever-changing world of increased concentration, I believe that is one of the core purposes of breed associations today, and we need to work to keep information and markets accessible to all breeders.

Lastly, the previous mission statement talked about taste as the key to consumer demand. The new statement acknowledges consumers have growing expectations of our product in addition to taste that we need to meet to keep beef as their protein of choice.

I know not everyone enjoys thinking about mission statements and strategic plans as much as I do, but I believe most agree you must have clarity around your purpose. With the new revisions, I hope we all can easily recall that our Association exists for the benefit of the breed, its breeders and making the beef industry better. 



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