

by Mark McCully  
CEO, American Angus Association



## Distractions

*I fondly remember the early years of learning to drive a tractor with my dad. Maybe it was just my father, but one of the key lessons was about going straight.*

No matter if I was mowing, raking hay, planting or cultivating, it was instilled in me straight lines are really important. And the key to straight lines was focusing on a point on the horizon and keeping your eyes on that target. If you spend much time looking down at the front wheels, there's a good chance you'll have some wandering lines throughout the field — a horror for an Illinois corn farmer.

While the straightness of the mower lines in the pasture probably has zero importance, it does remind me of the need to stay focused on the critical things in business — finding the straightest line and shortest path to our desired outcome. I think it boils down to avoiding the distractions that divert our attention from our goals.

We live in a world full of distractions. We are bombarded with people trying to get our attention. The amount of information coming at us every day is staggering. There never seems to be enough hours in the day to tackle all that we want to accomplish.

I recently saw a quote that said, "Your real competition is your

distraction." I believe this is spot-on true. We probably all suffer from the dreaded "something shiny disease," and likely spend too much time and too many resources chasing things that look exciting, but ultimately fail to advance our business and play out to be just another distraction.

A new term surfaced several years ago called "FOMO" or "fear of missing out." In a society where we have visibility to no end of others doing big things, going to exciting places and appearing to be wildly successful, our attention can quickly divert from what we are trying to achieve.


We can begin to question our plans

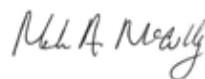
and feel like we aren't doing enough or missing some big opportunities. While FOMO is real, it can be a dangerous distraction to our smart, well-designed business plan if we don't guard against it.

The beef cattle genetics business is not friendly to distractions. The generation interval is long, and one distracted breeding season can influence an outfit for a long time

down the road. Yet the Angus breed is in a leadership position today because of so many breeders who kept a laser focus on their goals and avoided diversions. They didn't compare their course to another breeder's program or sale report, but kept their attention on the breeding objectives they had defined for their ranch and their customer.

I see that same discipline in so many breeders today, and it's what keeps me very optimistic about the future of Angus.

The theme of this issue is "Level Up." What that looks like to you is probably different than the breeder down the road, but I'd be willing to bet the key for both of you is to not letting distractions get in the way and divert your path. 



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