

# CATTLE CULTURE

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

## Being the Beacon

*Finding a mentor might sound like a complicated task, but what about conditioning yourself to be a mentor? Simplify the process with these five steps.*

When I first sat down to write about “Beacons of Knowledge” for this month’s column, I was immediately tempted to share tips on finding a mentor in life, but the words wouldn’t flow. I found myself a little lost on how to approach the article. I found myself in need of a mentor to share a few words of wisdom on how to start this column.

Then inspiration struck. I asked myself, “What makes a good mentor?” With the help of *Forbes* magazine, I have compiled this list of five traits that make a good mentor. This list could help you select a mentor if applied correctly, but, more importantly, it is designed to teach you how to transform yourself into a potential role model.

**1. Be a good listener.** A good listener focuses their mind on what an individual is saying, rather than constantly thinking of what their own response should be. Learn to direct your attention to the words (both spoken and unspoken) in a conversation, and fully



process those words before even beginning to craft your response. While being able to provide feedback is also important, the first step is truly understanding the mentee’s situation, and that understanding will only be achieved through listening.

**2. Be honest.** Providing feedback as a mentor is a delicate balance between offering support and delivering honest, pointed criticisms. While your mentees will likely need to be built up, you still have to be able to help them improve. You can be a cheerleader, but they came to you as a mentor to become better. Honestly critique their work and remember that

being honest is not the same as being harsh.

### **3. Be motivational and inspirational.**

One of the most critical roles of a mentor is to help a mentee desire to reach their highest potential. While you can’t physically make your mentees have a drive to improve, you can help

them feel comfortable enough to both believe in themselves and see the light at the end of the tunnel. Make it your personal mission to build their confidence, both in themselves and the project they brought to you for help.

**4. Be willing to establish mutual respect.** In my opinion, one of the most valuable traits in an individual is humility. While each of us likely possess an inborn talent or affinity, we will never be perfect. A crucial detail of filling the role of mentor is understanding those looking up to you are worthy of respect as well. They might be looking to you for

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advice, but their opinions and ideas are just as important as your own. Remember that age and importance do not determine an individual's worth.

**5. Be present and open.** Whatever you do in life, make sure you give it 110%. One of my favorite lessons growing up can be applied to the role of mentorship. To truly give effective advice, a mentor has to be willing to dedicate their complete attention to their

mentee. Be willing to serve in your role as mentor and make sure your pupil recognizes your eagerness.

Serving as a mentor is a role with large shoes to fill. However, with these five simple steps, the task seems a little less intimidating.

So whether you're a National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) member reading this column and discovering how to select a role model or a seasoned cattle producer who has raised generations of black-

hided cattle and are ready to pass on your years of wisdom to another, remember the relationship between an Angus mentor and an Angus mentee is one to be treasured.

I've always considered Angus people hold one another to a higher standard, and while I may be a little biased, it's one of the things I believe makes the Business Breed so special.

Because, truthfully, we can all find a mentor, but it takes a special individual to be a mentor. **AJ**

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