



# Setting the PACE

► by *Susan Rhode*, director of communications and public relations

## Sharpening your spokesperson skills

*Regardless of the audience — a newspaper, radio or television reporter, a civic group, a school class, or even a consumer standing at the meatcase — you should always put your best foot forward when representing the beef industry. This starts with dressing appropriately, acting and speaking with confidence and poise, and remembering to wear that friendly smile.*

*When reporters have a positive experience with a spokesperson — for example someone who gives them educated, newsworthy sound bites and who is punctual and easy to work with — they will call on that person to serve as a source for that issue again. Building these relationships is an important part of your role as a spokesperson.*

### Hey juniors ...

A reminder for all of the junior members reading this special issue: Take what you learned this summer from participating in the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) Cook-Off; in the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) public speaking contests; or in other Angus-related, 4-H or FFA activities back to school with you. Your classmates may not know about the nutritional advantages of eating beef and the good things that cattle producers are doing to preserve and enhance the environment. Don't be afraid to speak up and help us set the PACE!

### Keys to being a spokesperson

- Be open and honest.
- Answer questions to the best of your ability. If you don't know an answer to a question, say so. It's better to admit not knowing an answer than it is to give false information.
- Make positive statements about the industry.
- Be concise and straightforward when answering questions.
- Repeat key points. It will help clarify and emphasize main points.
- Use your voice and facial expressions to show energy and maintain the listener's attention.
- Use personal experiences to illustrate a point. This also helps the listener in remembering your viewpoint.
- When interacting with the general public, it is important to be a good listener and put yourself in their shoes.

### How much research should I do before an interview?

Only agree to do an interview on a subject you're comfortable with. If you have no experience with the topic, find a better source for the reporter. However, never go into an interview with only what you know off-the-cuff. Learn as much as your resources and time will allow. Find the latest statistics, and know them well. In addition, always know what impact the issue has had or will have on the local level. Mastering these two areas will lend credibility and news value to the interview. A combination of personal knowledge and experience, plus fact-based research, is what it takes to be prepared.

### How can I enhance my camera presence?

About 30% of the energy you project in a radio or TV interview never gets to the viewer. You must add energy to your body, voice and eyes. It will feel unnatural until you see the results, but you'll be perceived as a more knowledgeable and more professional spokesperson.

### How do I avoid getting misquoted in a newspaper?

Always ask to read the article prior to publication, but realize reporters often aren't willing to share stories before publication. Try taking your own tape recorder and setting it on the table. Let the reporter know you've been misquoted in the past, so you want to make sure "you" said things accurately. The reporter will perk up and try harder to write your quote down exactly as stated. If you're asked for a statement, type it and then fax or e-mail it. By doing so, it will

be even more difficult for the reporter to misquote you.

### Nutrition in the news

Nearly every day, research findings related to nutrition and health make the news. What should you do when today's report seems to contradict what you heard last week? Use caution and common sense. Depending on the credibility of the source, the information may not be worth the paper it's printed on. Here are some tips to pass on to consumers or to use as you sort the information yourself:

- Refrain from making changes in your food choices based on results from a single research study. The results of one study are just one piece of a bigger puzzle. Wait until more studies can confirm the results.
- Be wary of recommendations that promise a quick fix. Claims that sound too good to be true are usually just that.
- Remember to go beyond the headlines. Attention-grabbing headlines often oversimplify more complex findings. Bottom-line conclusions are usually reported at the end of a news story.
- Learn about the study methods. Longer studies, with more research subjects, are more likely to produce valid results. But be aware that the study results may not apply to you if the people studied differ in age, gender, health or lifestyle.
- Check out the sources. Credible research is conducted by a respectable scientific or medical organization and is reported by a reputable newspaper, newsletter, magazine or scientific journal.
- Look for expert interpretation. Reports of research findings often include reviews and advice from nutrition and health professionals, such as a registered dietitian.

E-MAIL: [srhode@angus.org](mailto:srhode@angus.org)

### The Last WORD...

**"Maybe if I did a better job of listening, history wouldn't have to repeat itself."**

—Unknown