



For Granted

► by **Eric Grant**, freelance writer

The pessimist

A good friend of mine is also one of the most pessimistic, downward-spiraling individuals I've ever known. His black cloud is part of his charm. And, there are few things better than sipping Crown Royal® with him and listening to him talk about how the walls of the world have crashed in around him.

Say it optimistically

The irony is that he sells his bulls pretty well each year. But I think his dark nature leaves plenty of cash on the table. If only he could bring a ray of sunshine into his business practices instead of a rainy day, he might be able to up his sale average by a considerable margin.

The message on his answering machine, for instance, is almost always a reflection of his doom and gloom.

"You have reached Go Figure Cattle Company," the machine drones along. "We still have breeding bulls for sale."

Still?

What does "still" imply? That he's selling leftovers? That his sale wasn't successful? That he's angry with his customers because they left him holding all of these bulls over?

Having covered the seedstock business since 1986, I've come to believe successful seedstock producers share two key attributes.

First, they're invariably optimistic people, and their optimism is contagious. People like to hitch their wagons to a horse that's going places, not to one that's on its last leg.

Second, bull buyers gravitate toward people who are effective communicators and can articulate what their breeding programs are all about.

Both of these traits take a lot of work. It's not easy being optimistic when it hasn't rained in three years. And, it's not easy being a good communicator when you've spent a lifetime learning the ins and outs of raising cattle.

Are you optimistic about the cattle you're producing, and can you articulate the economic benefits of using them?

Sum it up in 30 seconds

Can you sum up your breeding program in 30 seconds or less? If you can't, then you're

probably relinquishing advantages to your competitors.

Call it the "elevator speech," something that every great salesperson mastered years ago about the products or services they're selling. A good salesperson can always sum up what they have to sell in less than 30 seconds. They can tell you what it is, why you need to buy it, and what the benefits of it are.

And, they can sum it up fast, because they know an effective sales effort often comes down to time — and not soaking up too much of their customers.'

The difference between a good salesperson and a bad one is literally thousands of dollars. Practicing a few key messages — and changing your pessimistic ways — can go a long way in improving your bottom line and putting considerably more money in your bank account.

If you stutter and stammer around, trying to find the sweet spot in your message, your customers will often detect weakness or insecurity about who or what your product is. But if you can deliver your message with confidence — and confidence comes with practice — you'll gain more buyers than you'll lose.

I've often said that commercial producers don't just buy bulls; they buy ideas.

Take a look at the most successful seedstock producers in the country. You'll find they have a clear understanding of what their mission is, where their program is headed, and how it fits within the scope of the industry.

In other words, it's not just a matter of selling cattle, it's building ideas behind your product; finding a market niche where others share your ideas on how cattle should be bred, raised and produced; and delivering your message in a positive, optimistic tone.

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Editor's Note: "For Granted" is a monthly column written for the Angus Journal by Colorado-based freelance writer Eric Grant. The column focuses on marketing beef, the beef industry and seedstock in particular — aspects of the business that are often taken for granted as day-to-day tasks take center stage.

