



For Granted

► by **Eric Grant**, Angus Productions Inc. Creative Media manager

Last-minute jitters

The best strategy before your sale is to reach out and touch someone.

One week before our annual bull sale, an e-mail from one of our consignors arrived in my inbox:

“Hi, Eric. Are there any plans for radio advertising on some local stations this week? I think we may need some, and I believe we could get it fairly cheap. I thought it might be a good idea if we worked a little harder to get our message out this week.”

Stick to your guns

Free would be nice, and extra exposure the week before the sale is always good, but our small group of consignors decided against placing radio spots for two reasons:

- First, we felt the advertising program we’d put in place several months ago would be sufficient to drive our message home and motivate buyers to attend our sale.
- Second, we decided a long time ago

that we wouldn’t let the last-minute jitters spur us into making last-minute decisions on advertising and promotion. We would put in place a plan and stick with it — no matter the outcome.

Your phone is your friend

No doubt, the last two weeks leading up to a sale can make even the most weathered sale manager wake up in a cold sweat.

There are always lingering doubts about how effective an advertising program is. There are always questions about how well it’s been executed. And you will always wonder — right up until the sale begins — if you’ve sufficiently motivated people to attend your event.

The problem is that every bull sale — no matter how big or small — is a gamble. Every bull sale succeeds or fails based on how well you advertise and market it. Every bull sale depends on how well you communicate with and motivate your buyers. And, every bull sale is subject to the whims of weather.

When the gravity of your gamble begins to sink in and the last-minute jitters come calling, the temptation is to toss all reason aside, to grab some last-minute advertising in a last, desperate bid to snatch up as much attention as you possibly can.

In truth, you’re far better off grabbing your cell phone, pulling on your walking shoes and taking a long stroll through one of your pastures.

Spend an hour or two every day to call your customers. Talk to them about your sale. Make specific recommendations about which cattle they should invest in. Find out how the bulls they bought from you last year are doing.

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Your telephone, in times of high anxiety, is actually your best friend. It doesn’t cost much to make phone calls these days, and it actually soothes the nerves to talk to people about the business, your sale offering and how you can work together to improve both of your economic conditions.

About three weeks before our sale, we normally conduct a conference call with all of our consignors. We go over the details of the sale, discuss the advertising and marketing efforts, and explore potential strategies for sale order.

Most of all, we work our way through our list of potential buyers, assigning each consignor with a list of names that they must call in the days leading up to the sale.

The information we glean from our conversations helps us in

innumerable ways. We know which sale lots have the most interest. We understand where our sale-day weaknesses are. We approach our sale order in an educated, disciplined fashion, knowing where to place specific animals to maximize their value and where to place others to leverage their value even higher.

Most of all, we get a sense of how well our advertising and marketing has worked. And with this kind of information in hand, we’re able to attack next year’s event in a more disciplined and effective manner, which not only boosts the value of what we have to sell, but also more effectively reaches customers who have a sincere interest in investing in what we have.

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Editor’s Note: “For Granted” is a monthly column written for the Angus Journal by Angus Productions Inc. Creative Media Manager 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.