



For Granted

by Eric Grant, Angus Productions Inc. Creative Media manager

Time goes by

A journalist once asked Albert Einstein, what's the purpose of time?

The grey-haired physicist drew a deep breath, leaned back in his chair, and responded:

"So everything doesn't happen at once."

Importance of 'non-work'

Ranchers have a pretty good perspective on time. They know most things in their business take lots of it. Cows produce just one calf per year. Calves take months to reach sale weight. Ranchers look upon the work of their grandparents and parents every day, reminded constantly of the achievements and failures in the history of their families.

But most ranchers don't have much patience for marketing and advertising. It takes too much time. So they want it to happen at once. They'd rather be setting posts or stretching wire. They see it as "non-work," a seasonal annoyance that comes up a few months before bull selling begins.

My uncle summed it up once this way: "You know, all I really want to do is just raise cows."

The reality, however, is that the margin

between those who just want to raise cows and those who understand the value of marketing and advertising widens each year.

Marketing allows you to tell your story to customers across the country and around the world.

Advertising tells them what you have to sell — and why they should invest in your program.

If you have neither, or poorly executed examples of both, you simply have a cow herd like everyone else's. There is no mark of distinction. No differentiating aspects. No ability to add value to what you do.

Ultimately, I tell a lot of people, it's your personality,

your words and ideas, and your production and management practices that add value to cows.

It's often words or pictures or web sites that separate the good marketers from the bad ones.

The key to effective marketing and advertising is understanding that it shouldn't happen all at once.

So I tell folks this: The key to effective marketing and advertising is understanding that it shouldn't happen all at once. It requires a long-term approach. It demands planning. It means you have to be in the marketing trenches when your neighbors are harvesting hay.

It also means you need to embrace new technologies — like web sites, e-newsletters and video — but retain the basics like the telephone calls, handwritten letters and enjoying good conversations with customers.

It also means you need to understand how the world is changing. It no longer moves at a cowboy's pace. Things are moving rapidly, and cultural expectations of time — that information needs to be delivered at the moment someone requests it — are spilling into our pastures and hayfields and reshaping the rural landscape forever.

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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.

