



Angus Stakes

► by **Shauna Rose Hermel**, editor

Leaders in innovation

We often hear the American Angus Association and its members praised for leading the beef cattle industry in innovation — the theme of this issue. Certainly, we have the track record to back it up. From establishing our performance database to giving Angus breeders a marketing edge via the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand to utilizing multiple media avenues to put the spotlight on the breed and its breeders, the Association has repeatedly shown its ability to create solutions for emerging needs. The members who give it direction are largely responsible. We chose to focus this issue on the innovations of our members and their customers.

Ground-level innovation

It wasn't hard to fill the pages with examples of ways individual producers have gotten creative to fill a need.

Scott Lake, John Henn and their Wyoming cohorts created a structured management and marketing program customized for their locale to help sellers sell and buyers buy replacement heifers (see page 40). Kit West has built a livelihood out of developing and selling replacements to those who don't have the time or the resources. West has gotten creative in his marketing strategies (see page 46).

Drought forced the Petersons of Plum Thicket Farms, Gordon, Neb., to be innovative in sourcing their feed supply (see page 50). The Honolds of Iowa's HAT Ranch look differently at their role in the business of supplying seedstock, and that affects their whole business (see page 54.)

While Rick Rasby describes the necessity of providing cattle plenty of clean, safe water

in "Ridin' Herd" (see page 62), author Barb Baylor Anderson describes how solar-powered pumps are being used to provide water in the absence of electricity (see page 76).

U.S. Premium Beef succeeded where other efforts failed in creating a vertically coordinated marketing opportunity. Participants share their takes on why (see page 78).

Arizona cattleman Chuck Backus, a nuclear engineer by trade, could be the poster child for innovative thinking. Read how he's relying on Angus in a landscape larger than life (see page 90).

In a changing consumer market, the industry must be innovative in its messaging and approach to consumers. Kindra Gordon shares examples on page 90 and page 98.

Reason for optimism

When people start to question where we in

agriculture — and especially the livestock sector — fit into the future, these success stories are reassuring. In the face of rising input costs and mounting external influences, we can still think creatively to find solutions to what looms on the horizon. The ability of those in the United States to innovate is largely responsible for Lowell Catlett's optimism about our future (see page 100).

However, before we get too full of ourselves, we also need to realize history is full of innovative companies, organizations and individuals who seemed to hit a wall. The need for innovation is continual. Irving Wladawsky-Berger provides an inside look at the rise and "near death" of IBM at

<http://bit.ly/12FtrMz>.

Most interesting are his takes on what brought IBM back — talent and investment in research and development; harmony with the marketplace; and relationships and collaborations, especially with customers.

"Listening to and collaborating with customers, especially in times of trouble, might very well be one of the most important cultural innovations that every company needs to embrace," he noted.

Being customer-focused isn't a new concept, but it is central to whether our efforts to innovate take root. So, as Holly Green advises (see page 103), let's take a minute to give our brains time to think innovatively about how we can earn the customer loyalty that will keep our families in business for generations.

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To be an indispensable partner to the beef industry, providing leading-edge information and marketing strategies through a unique range of print and digital platforms.

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