



For Granted

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

Of moose and Deere

“Leopold looked up at the arrow piercing the skin of the dirigible with a sort of wondrous dismay — the wheezy shriek was just the sort of sound he always imagined a baby moose being beaten with a pair of accordions might make.”

This sentence was written by Shannon Wedge of New Hampshire. It was among the winners at the recently concluded Bulwer-Lytton “wretched writing contest.”

Decoding the riddle

Wretched writing comes in all forms, but the worst of all is written by people who are the most intelligent among us.

I could never figure out why university researchers just love to moisten their palettes and launch into some lengthy discourse about this technical thing or that, only to lose their audience after they pen the very first sentence.

Why don't people just say what they mean and leave it at that?

I guess it's a good thing we've got researchers because I've made a living through the years rewriting their papers for regular Joes to understand.

My process is as involved as it is technical: I usually skip over the first 85 pages of tables, charts and hyperbole and summarize the summary.

It's like a squirrel bounding through treacherous branches and limbs to finally find the peanut dangling near a leaf.

Now *that* was a bad sentence.

Which brings me to my point: The true test of writing is not whether it's written, but whether someone reads it.

There's lots of writing in the world today, but who's actually reading this stuff?

The highest purpose of writing is to convey ideas, thoughts and information to others, not to confuse them with your brilliance.

Throughout the years, I've written stories

that I thought were great, but didn't elicit a single response from readers.

I've also written stuff that I thought was awful, but it motivated people to write, call and e-mail.

Go figure.

Competing for time

As Angus breeders, you're faced with the same challenge that I am, particularly when it comes to advertising and marketing your breeding program.

You are, in effect, competing for slices of time — 10 seconds, 45 seconds, 60 seconds. You don't want people to turn the page. You want them glued in their chairs, reaching for their phones to book a flight and grabbing their checkbooks to bring along.

Getting one's attention is one thing. Motivating someone to

contact you is another.

We spend a lot of time working with clients on this very challenge. I want our clients to get noticed, but noticed for the right reasons. I want their materials not only to grab attention, but also to motivate people to do business.

And what I've learned is this: It begins with words that speak truthfully and honestly to the marketplace, and builds from there with good photos, video, web sites, logos and other elements such as color.

Take a look at John Deere. All a farmer has to see is green and yellow to get all warm

and fuzzy inside. It's like catnip for corn growers. The colors speak to the marketplace in so many positive ways: quality, reliability, tradition and family, rural values. The list is endless.

Combine those elements with their slogan — *Nothing Runs Like A Deere*™ — and you've got a winner.

Indeed, nothing sells like simplicity. Nothing builds business like a reputation for quality. Nothing positions product like simplicity of message.

And as the saying goes, unlike a shrieking moose, nothing runs like a Deere.

One more comment ...

If you managed to get to the bottom of this column, drop me a note. I'm curious if you're sleeping or not. Let me know what topics of discussion you'd like me to write about in future editions of “For Granted.” Write me at egrant@api-creativemedia.com.

Also, there's been a considerable amount of time and energy put into the readership survey, which appeared in last month's *Angus Journal*. If you haven't responded to it yet, take some time to fill it out. Shauna Hermel and her team of writers and editors — the best in the business — would love to hear from you. It will help shape the direction of the publication for years to come and ensure what we write here has relevance to what you do there.

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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.

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