

Data-driven Marketing

Angus Media shares analytics with customers to refine marketing efforts.

by *Laura Conaway, Certified Angus Beef LLC*

Longtime ag communications veteran Eric Grant addressed the crowd gathered Nov. 4 for the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show in Overland Park, Kan. The general manager of Angus Media brought 30 years of experience to the topic of data-driven marketing, urging producers to make use of the tools available to them through the Association's web page.

"People really come to *Angus.org* to search and find information that's useful to their operations," Grant said, emphasizing the importance of website functionality when it comes to attracting more customers.

Grant and his team gather analytics on the Association's own site and those of about 350 Angus ranching partners to keep a pulse on current communication trends, as well as monitor public relations for the breed.

A large spike in activity could be cause for concern, Grant said. It's best if cattlemen see a gradual growth each year.

"You want to use the data we're compiling here as a benchmark, a roadmap for improving engagement on your site," he said. "Bigger numbers, more page views, more sessions

just means more people are coming to spend more time with you instead of somebody else who has cattle to sell. Up and to the right is the rule."

Identifying trends

One obvious finding is the shift of communication materials from print to digital and, as a result, websites that are most effective when equipped to be responsive to each electronic device. Grant said nearly 50% of the activity on *www.angus.org* is accessed through a smartphone or tablet — a percentage that was zero only five years ago and is expected to eclipse desktop usage — to access brochures and sale books. The latter, when in digital form, are what



PHOTO BY LEANN SCHLEICHER, ANGUS MEDIA

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the communications veteran called the "heartbeat of the Angus breed."

Data comparing page views from September 2014 to September 2015 revealed an increase of 51%.

"There's room in this growth for engagement and interest in things you have to sell," Grant told the cattlemen. "We just need to find better ways to get it out in front

of people so they can take advantage of it."

Enticing visitors

He encouraged Angus producers to think of their website as a store, something they would like people to visit, explore and return to again.

If there's one thing that drives people to that "store" or a digital sale book, Grant said, it's a good photo.

"Some of our highest-performing sale books have really good shots of cattle," he noted. "As much data as we assemble, bottom line is people still like to look at pictures."

Grant advised cattlemen to take lots of pictures of cattle through different stages and seasons to gather "hay in the barn" for later updates.

"Keep fresh photos, fresh information in front of people all the way through, and send personalized emails letting them know you've updated your website."

What's more, Grant advised making sure the site maintains a focus on the customer vs. the seller and asking for help to improve search engine optimization (SEO).

"Most active websites are the ones that talk about the things they sell to their customers," he observed. They have a working phone number to boot.

Being social

When it comes to social media platforms and which one to use, Grant said it's more about a partnership of using all of them together.

"It's not really an either/or proposition honestly. You need to be in both arenas. You have to be in multiple audiences or you're going to miss people somewhere."

Grant spoke during Angus University's educational block focused on advertising and marketing. The educational series was sponsored by Merck Animal Health. To listen to his presentation and to view the session's PowerPoint, visit the convention Newsroom at <http://angusjournal.com/NCnTS/2015/index.html>.



Editor's Note: *Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC. This article is part of the online coverage of the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show provided by Angus Media. Visit the convention Newsroom available at <http://angusjournal.com/NCnTS/2015/index.html> to access additional summaries, PowerPoint presentations and the audio of the sessions.*

You can listen to Eric Grant's presentation at <http://bit.ly/NACTS15grantAUD>.

