

Farm Today's Social Community

Extend your reach through social media.

Story & photo by **Paige Nelson**, field editor

In a room full of people attending the Farming Your Social Community Angus University workshop, only a few hands raised when Michele Payne-Knoper asked, “Who is on social media?”

Why?

“Because farmers and ranchers are modest, independent and stubborn. You’d rather deal with your animals or your land than all this people crap, right?” she queried her audience at the November Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show in Overland Park, Kan.

Payn-Knoper raises Holstein cows and is known as a leading farm and food advocate.

She then asked her audience who, if anyone, was upset or may have even grumbled about Subway’s recent announcement that its restaurants would only serve protein from animals that had never received antibiotics.

This time, almost every hand shot up.

“Did you complain four months ago, or did you talk to people four weeks ago about why you use antibiotics?” Payn-Knoper asked. “You don’t have permission to gripe and whine and moan when foodservice companies, and others, make decisions based upon what pressures they’re getting from activists groups, if you’re not talking about issues proactively.”

Tell your personal story

“I have found, through personal experience, that social media is the singular best way to talk to people proactively about hormones, antibiotics, food safety, animal care and all the other crazy issues they care about, because it allows us



▶ “Social media is about having a conversation. It’s about listening to somebody,” says Michele Payne-Knoper. Catch her interview with *The Angus Report* by clicking the photo above or by turning your web browser to <http://bit.ly/NACTS15paynINT>.



to share our human personal story,” she stated.

Payn-Knoper defines social media as mass influence. She said thanks to social media, she has been able to extend her reach by at least 1,000-fold. She noted social media as a tool to expand people’s reach, whether that reach is to sell cattle or tell beef’s and agriculture’s story.

She listed Facebook, YouTube, Google+, Instagram and Twitter as some of the top social media sites for connecting with consumers.

For those interested in learning in detail about each social media channel, she referred them to her website www.causematters.com, where visitors can search “ag and social media.” This is basically an owner’s manual or a “how to” tutorial on social media, she asserted.

Again, why social media? According to her own research since January 2009, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has seen a 550-fold increase on Twitter. Greenpeace has experienced an 850-fold increase on Facebook. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has shown a 200-fold increase on Facebook.

“Ultimately, in 2015, for those of you that are perhaps a bit skeptical about the value of social media, it’s about protecting your right to farm and ranch as you see fit,” she claimed.

Payn-Knoper detailed

the target audience, the 2015 consumer, as someone who believes in convenience, wants information immediately, is always connected, ignores ads and seeks authenticity.

Three steps to success

Success with social media boils down to three steps: Know your purpose, build a community around that purpose and be a resource to your community, she listed.

Furthermore, she stated, social media is not a place to “educate” the consumer.

“How many of you would throw a person off your farm if they walked onto your farm and said, ‘I need to educate you on how to breed better cattle because you’re stupid.’ Yet, we in agriculture, in all of our glory, say, ‘Stupid consumer, let me educate you.’”

“Social media is about having a conversation. It’s about listening to somebody. It’s relating to them and then, and only then, once you have made a connection through their hearts, do you have the opportunity to educate them.”

With one last call to action, Payn-Knoper challenged her audience to participate in one social media channel for 15 minutes every day for three weeks.

“Social media is about having fun with other people. It’s about engaging in conversation and that’s not all serious business. It’s not all advocating. It’s not all hard-core issues management. ... It is about being a human being first and foremost and connecting with others on a human basis,” she concluded.

Payn-Knoper presented two workshops during Angus University’s educational block focused on Responsible Beef. The educational series was sponsored by Merck Animal Health. To listen to her presentations and PowerPoints, visit the convention Newsroom at <http://angusjournal.com/NCnTS/2015/index.html>.



Editor’s Note: Paige Nelson is a freelancer and cattlemaster from Rigby, Idaho. 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.

Championing Agriculture: 6 conversation cornerstones to help

Touting her animal science degree from Michigan State University, Michele Payn-Knoper of Cause Matters Corp. and a leading farm and food advocate, gave it to her Angus University audience straight. When it comes to protecting farmers’ and ranchers’ right to farm how they choose — cut the science, spread the feelings.

“I love science. I just happen to believe that it doesn’t work in having a conversation around food, particularly in today’s emotional conversations when you look at what others are having,” she said at the Championing Agriculture workshop at the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show in November.

Payn-Knoper offered six steps cattlemen and women can use to have a conversation and share their stories. Those stories, she clarified, don’t necessarily have to be shared on social media if you don’t want. Have them in the church parking lot if you choose.

“At the end of the day, I’m asking you to do one thing, and it’s pretty simple. I’m asking you to share why you love agriculture with the people that matter to you,” she challenged.

No. 1: Who? — Define your target: One and a half percent of the U.S. population lives on a farm or ranch, she said. That means to 98.5% of the U.S. population what we do is very novel. Ask yourself who specifically it is that you need to focus on to have the conversation about beef, about agriculture.

No. 2: What? — Know their passion: Referring to hot-button issues, Payn-Knoper encouraged her listeners to know their target audience’s hot buttons, or points of passion. Remember, she cautioned, “It’s their hot buttons, not yours, and they’re not all related to farming food.”

No. 3: Why? — Connect with hot buttons: “My informal research across the country shows dietitians are interested in making science-based decisions, they want people to understand what they do, and they want respect. Sound familiar?” she questioned.

Figure out ways to prick the audience’s curiosity. She suggested ruminant nutritionists refer to themselves as “cow dietitians.”

She also suggested dropping the agriculture acronyms and speaking the same language as those across the plate.

No. 4: When? — Invest in your future: Over and over she said, “Be proactive.” “Angus breeders, if you are already doing the right thing taking care of your cattle, why aren’t you talking about it?” she posed. “Proactive conversations always win over defensive reactions.”

The next best business practice of 2015 should be spending 15 minutes each day telling your story, she suggested. Share on social media, share in person and share however you want, she said.

“You can figure out where it makes the most sense based upon your target audience ... It’s about protecting your future. It’s about protecting your children and grandchildren’s future.”

No. 5: Where? — Think global, act local: These are global issues, but work on them from a local basis, Payn-Knoper encouraged.

No. 6: How? — Commit to a plan: This plan will allow you to channel your passion in a positive way, she said.

“It will empower you to truly reach people that you probably thought you would never reach,” Payn-Knoper stated. “I can tell you from my personal experience that I have seen thousands of people impacted because of these six steps.”

“At the end of the day, you may think you are in the Angus business. I would beg to differ,” she emphasized. “You are absolutely in the people business because the reality is that everything we do in agriculture is to touch human beings and to help human beings.”

You can listen to
Michele Payn-Knoper’s
presentation on
championing agriculture
at <http://bit.ly/1Z385F8>.

You can listen to
Michele Payn-Knoper’s
presentation on farming
the social community at
<http://bit.ly/1SvHf3n>