

Branding Your Cattle Operation

Branding a beef product and creating a brand for your Angus operation follow the same steps.

by Paige Nelson, field editor

Branded beef is no stranger in the cattle industry. Brands on cattle are identification tools. Similarly, the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand is about identification, too. The brand helps consumers identify and purchase a quality product they can trust.

Registered-Angus producers also need brands to help customers identify with them, said John Stika, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) president, at the Angus Means Business National Angus Convention & Trade Show's Angus University in November.

"Brands are about delivering a promise, delivering value, delivering consistency, delivering an image, delivering a lifestyle to consumers today," he stated.

"Customers who buy your bulls are looking to engage with you for more than just a product transaction," he told his primarily registered-Angus producer audience.

"Why should people care about your brand?" challenged Stika. "Why should they engage your brand in a way that drives business, creates a relationship and creates a connection?"

His answer? It's about being relevant to the consumer.

He explained relevancy as based on what the customer understands about the brand and what they are willing to act upon. In other words, relevant brands are established on the things that are important to the meat consumer/bull buyer, emphasizing it might have nothing to do with what is important to the meat producer/bull provider.

A successful brand,



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► "Why should people care about your brand?" CAB President John Stika challenged the Angus University audience. "Why should they engage your brand in a way that drives business, creates a relationship and creates a connection?"

said Stika, should communicate four things to its audience:

1. Promise to exceed consumer expectations

"We know consumers buy CAB, not because it's cheap; they buy it because it tastes great, because it fulfills a need," said Stika, who has led the brand since 2006.

"Those who buy your Angus bulls are looking for the exact same things. They're looking to buy Angus bulls because they exceed the expectation that

they have when they look at those that are perhaps selling other breeds of cattle."

2. Value

In 2014-2015 CAB sold 896 million pounds (lb.) of product, marking the ninth year of record sales and the 11th year of consecutive growth year-over-year.

Noting the challenges of the Great Recession of 2008-2009, Stika said, "One of the most expensive beef products in the market had nine years in a row of record sales during the worst economy that we've experienced for many of us in this room."

He continued, "Consumers don't buy products on price alone. They buy it on a price in relation to value proposition."

3. Delivering consistency

Successful brands deliver on expectations and exceed expectations regularly, he explained.

"Consistency is important because brand loyalty or customer trust are established over time, and they can be lost overnight," he quipped.

4. Creating an image

Consumers are evaluating brands beyond the quality offered by the product. They want to make a connection with the brand.

"People want to be a part of something bigger today," Stika said. "They want to be a part of what you do at ranch level when they buy a steak at a restaurant.

"Commercial cattlemen want to be a part of what you do," he continued. "They want to be a part of your program."

Consumers know they don't understand much about the beef industry, and they definitely want to know more. Share your



story, he said, encouraging his listeners to make those connections.

“While buying beef is definitely an economic decision, it’s influenced by emotion. How do these brands make them feel?” Stika asked.

“From a *Certified Angus Beef* standpoint, you’ll see us making that connection to ranch level much more aggressively . . . than we have at any point in our 37-year history, because consumers want to be a part of what you’re doing in rural areas across the country,” he concluded.

Stika spoke as part of Angus University, which featured an industry-leading lineup of speakers and panelists who explored “A Story of a Steak” and what it will take to supply high-quality beef to consumers worldwide. An extension of the award-winning series of articles in the *High Plains Journal* and segments on *The Angus Report*, the convention series was sponsored by Merck Animal Health.

To listen to his presentation or view his PowerPoints, visit the convention Newsroom at <http://angusjournal.com/NCnTS/2015/index.html>.



Editor’s Note: Paige Nelson is a freelance writer from Rigby, Idaho.

