

# Building a Brand

Leaders in beef branding share insights for developing individual brands.

by *Nicole Lane, freelancer*

**W**hat do marketing Harley-Davidson motorcycles and Angus seedstock have in common? Not a lot and everything, according to John Stika, president of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB). While we can't swap out an exhaust system in an Angus cow to create a new product, producers can provide a great customer experience — something the experts on Angus University's brand-building panel all described as vital to brand reputation.

Bob McClaren of 44 Farms, the largest

registered-Angus seedstock operation in Texas, earned his marketing background from professional baseball. In baseball, he couldn't always provide a win for fans, but he strove to create a good experience. This philosophy transferred to the cattle business.

"We want people to come to 44 Farms because then we could tell them our story and the foundation of what we are trying to build, and they could become our friends, and

then they could become good customers," McClaren said.

Jonathan Perry of Deer Valley Farms and Eric Grant, general manager for Angus Media, echoed the message that brands are all about relationships.

The product and genetic foundation are important, Perry said, but in the Angus breed, quality genetics don't set people apart. He looks for things in his business that make him different



PHOTO COURTESY OF 44 FARMS





► Building a brand is all about relationships, agreed panelists (from left) Bob McClaren of 44 Farms, Texas; Jonathan Perry of Deer Valley Farms, Tennessee; and Eric Grant, general manager of Angus Media. Following the presentation, Perry shared some additional comments on branding with *The Angus Report*. Watch the segment by turning your web browser to <http://bit.ly/NACTS15perryINT>. Digital readers can click the photos above.



from his neighbor. Standing behind his product at Deer Valley Farms has been one of his brand-defining attributes.

Stika challenged producers to create noise that no one else can make when crafting a personal trademark. When the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand began, it was the only Angus beef brand on the market. Today there are more than 139 USDA-certified programs that use Angus in their name. However, only one is owned by the American Angus Association, and Stika said they use that quality to help rise to the top.

McClaren said these individual brand factors can be created and discovered in a variety of ways. Listening to customers and hearing their needs and goals can open the door to brand identities that will create

an important emotional attachment. This attachment and an honest relationship are what produced the 44 Farms brand.

“Connecting with the Angus community in a consistent, truthful and transparent way has helped us establish ourselves,” McClaren said. “You’ve got to touch all the bases and try things you don’t understand.”

Perry advised that brand building is going to involve leaving the comfort zone, especially in today’s diverse advertising market. While Deer Valley Farms reaches a lot of customers at the print level, he emphasized that cattlemen are now doing business on their cellphones. Websites, social media and other forms of digital media are important in creating a brand in the cattle business now, too.

Grant reiterated this fact as Angus Media has seen an increase in digital salebooks and mobile users visiting its websites.

“We are a believer in the old marketing as much as the new,” said Perry.

The most important factor in building a brand is remembering who to target. When designing a plan and considering where you want to go, Grant emphasized

envisioning it in the hands of the people the brand is pursuing.

“The brand is not about you; it’s about the customer,” Grant said.

The panel spoke as part of Angus University, which was sponsored by Merck Animal Health and 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. To listen to the presentation, visit the convention Newsroom at <http://angusjournal.com/NCnTS/2015/index.html>.



**Editor’s Note:** Nicole Lane was a former intern for the Angus Journal.