

COMMON GROUND

I like offense



Mark McCully, CEO
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I know there are those who would argue, but I tend to enjoy sporting events with a lot of offense. Maybe that's why when I moved to Saint Joseph, it was easy to become a Kansas City Chiefs fan. It didn't take long before I had discarded 19 years of attempting to become a Cleveland Browns follower to jump squarely on the Chiefs' bandwagon.

Anyone who follows professional football knows the Chiefs are known for their creative, big-play, high-octane brand of offense. While I try to appreciate a grind-it-out style of game where the final score is 6 to 3, if I am being honest, I get bored quickly and find myself channel surfing by the second quarter.

A strategy for business, too

My appreciation for a good offense carries over to my philosophy on business strategy, too. Although as I look across agriculture, I tend to find our industry dedicating most of our resources to defense. I understand where this comes from. For one, there is a humble nature across all of agriculture. Actively promoting the good things we are doing and the excellent products we produce probably feels like chest-pounding to many. Those in agriculture tend to simply put their head down, do the work, and go on about their business with little fanfare or advertisement.

We can easily get into a defensive mindset when there are so many arrows being launched our way. Some days it feels like the 2% of those feeding the world are being attacked by the other 98%. False accusations about how we care for our animals or steward the land can prompt us to hunker down and just try to weather the storm.

Still, I believe the old adage that the best defense is a great offense. If a competitor is producing a better product, I believe it is smart strategy to spend our time and energy improving instead of restricting the competitor's ability to market.

Rather than respond to every false accusation getting tossed our way, I believe we need to be on the offensive and control the narrative and conversation.

The strategy works

The success story of the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand is a prime example of playing offense. In the 1970s the prevailing thought process was "fat is bad." Yet Angus breeders understood marbling (intramuscular fat) was incredibly important to making sure beef was flavorful, juicy and tender. In 1978 the CAB brand was established to go on the offense, promoting highly marbled beef. The strategy was sound, and the success speaks for itself. Last year more than 1.2 billion pounds of CAB products were sold, creating tremendous value and demand for producers of high-quality Angus-influenced cattle and registered Angus genetics.

Let's learn from that experience. I can guarantee the move to launch CAB seemed risky when it would have been much easier to hang back and let others control the path. However, cattlemen took charge of their own product and changed the course of the center-of-the-plate proteins. They knew it was a case of lead or be led.

As we go forward as an industry, let's make offensive moves. Let's be proactive and control the pace and direction of the game. I'm convinced doing so will allow us to celebrate many more wins in the future. |

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