



Up Front

by **JOHN CROUCH**, executive vice president, American Angus Association

Dealing with change

A wise man once said there are four essential attributes that prevail within every successful person or organization

Assess the situation

The first attribute is the ability to assess. We must be able to assess the situation before direction can be determined. The ability of a pilot to assess weather patterns and climate changes often determines the safety of the flight.

The correct assessment of future market conditions and their response to supply and demand determines profit or loss in the business world. The accurate determination of future consumer demands is imperative in order to properly prepare a successful business plan.

Our future successes in the Angus industry will be determined by our ability to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that exist in the beef marketplace.

Communication

The second attribute for success is the ability to communicate. A popular misconception is that conversation is communication. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

The art of successful communication begins with first assessing the problem. From a business standpoint, one must identify the customer, then determine what consumers want and when they want it. In order to communicate successfully, you must then convey your thought processes to others in such a manner that they understand your desires and needs. Successful communication is a constant process and requires a deep understanding of human nature.

Embrace change

The third attribute for success is the ability to embrace change. No business is static; we are either advancing or we are retreating. During the past two decades, we in the Angus industry have

gone from simply producing cattle to producing a high-quality food product through the efforts of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB).

We have evolved from the simple calculation of average daily gain (ADG) in the early 1960s to a highly sophisticated system of genetic evaluation, wherein some 17 traits of economic relevance are measured. Dick Spader, former Association executive vice president, once said, "This highly accurate genetic information has become today's currency in the beef industry."

While some breeds are struggling, Angus has enjoyed a period of unprecedented growth since the mid-80s. The primary reasons for this growth are not secrets. Angus breeders assessed industry needs, embraced change and communicated with customers.

Lifelong learning

The fourth attribute mentioned by Russ Weathers, CEO of Agriculture

Future of America, is the ability to have a lifelong learning experience.

It has been said that success sometimes fosters complacency. We all tend to settle into a level of comfort as we become familiar with our surroundings. When it becomes necessary to expand our horizons due to a changing environment, it is perfectly normal to experience a certain amount of fear of the unknown. However, if the situation is properly assessed from a completely objective standpoint, the learning process can be greatly enhanced.

Greg Henderson editorialized in *Drovers* some time back regarding the awesome responsibility of the leaders of the Angus breed. If we are to maintain this leadership role, we must heartily endorse these four attributes for success pointed out by Weathers and put them to use in the Angus world.

