

# VALUE BEGINS WITH TRUST

Build trust with differentiation, documentation, verification and effort.

Commentary by Troy Marshall, American Angus Association

Gallup has been tracking Americans' views on industry sectors for more than 20 years. It recently released survey results rating U.S. industries. Restaurants and computers have tended to hold the No. 1 positive rankings, but for the first time the undisputed leader was farming and agriculture.

That is exciting news to me, even though the general public is becoming further removed from agriculture, and even though we have been targeted by so many activist groups, Americans respect what we do and how we do it.

Our industry has done a tremendous job of recognizing that we must safeguard and protect the trust that consumers place with us, and that commitment has paid off. In fact, the top three industry segments — farming and agriculture, the grocery industry, and the restaurant industry — are all related to our food supply.

Not surprisingly, the airline, oil and gas, and television and radio industries don't fare too well on the survey. The last six industries on the list probably were predictable, as well, with one notable exception. The last six are the legal field, the movie industry, advertising and public relations, sports industry, pharmaceutical industry and the federal government.

The industry that got the most attention was the sports industry. It was the biggest mover in the survey by a considerable margin. It went from a +20 net positive image to a -10 net positive score. The downward slide in perception for the sports industry shows that decades of goodwill can disappear in a very short period of time.

It also illustrates the effect of

being perceived as picking sides on the political front, especially in the highly partisan or divided environment in which we find ourselves. Except for the pharmaceutical industry, the six industries with the most negative scores are all considered to be taking sides or directly involved in politics.

## Takeaways

I think there are a few takeaway thoughts from this study. Big moves are usually driven by big events, and there have been very few events bigger than the pandemic. Industry segments that benefited from the increased focus were agriculture, health, pharmaceutical and internet segments. The focus increased on these industries, and they responded well.

Being overtly political is not a good idea, unless your customer base is already decidedly partisan or unified around an issue. In the case of the sports industry category, there was little

movement in how Democrats felt about the industry, but its rating plummeted among Independents and Republicans.

Agriculture saw relatively uniform improvement across parties, age groups, gender and race categories, while others saw declines and improvements disproportionately among these groups. Political activism is dangerous because it turns off those individuals who don't agree with the messages or how they are expressed.

## Managing the brand

Whether you are looking at the marketing equation from an individual ranch basis, a breed, or an industry perspective — trust matters. We are all managing a brand, and that brand image or position must be closely guarded and cultivated. This is especially true in times of turmoil or rapid change.

Value can sometimes be a nebulous term, but creating and capturing value is built upon a foundation of trust and the general perception consumers have about your entity. The message you present is important, but how you

present that message is equally important.

As individuals we have to be cognizant not only of being perceived as honest players in the marketplace, with the best interest of our customers and society at the core of our philosophy — we must be seen as honest and accurate with the information we present, and we must be seen as making a positive contribution.

I think it is easy for most cattlemen to see the value in genetics, in health protocols, in taking care of the land, etc.; but to many, marketing what you have done seems self-serving at worst and intangible at best. We should look at marketing as being what

it is — not only foundational to the success of any business, but the means by which one can broaden their influence and benefit others.

The commercial programs of the American Angus Association are geared around the belief that what is good for the industry is good for the Angus breed, and that which is good for commercial cattlemen is good for Angus breeders.

We believe tremendous opportunities exist to capture the true value of Angus genetics in the marketplace, and that while there is no single word in the cattle industry that creates more value than Angus, that Angus is simply the building block for successful marketing. That value comes from differentiation, documentation, verification and effort.

The goal is to help you create and capture value, and our team is committed to that. Give us a call and let's get started. |

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Editor's note: Troy Marshall is director of commercial industry relations for the American Angus Association.