



Your Link to

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Marketing your brand

When was the last time you really thought about your brand? I don't mean its design, or how that one corner gives you fits at branding time. I mean the image and the reputation that your brand conveys about your company, farm or ranch.

I hope you thought about it today, because today you surely did something that affected its value. Maybe it was talking to a feedlot manager, deciding on a vaccine protocol with your veterinarian, dealing with your banker or negotiating the sale on a load of cattle.

Like any brand, yours represents a promise — a guarantee of what your product offers and how it will perform. It holds equity, or value, based on the product and experiences you have provided customers in the past. What do you want to be known for?

After 14 years with the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, the last nine years heading up the company's branding efforts, I have noticed a few common themes that transcend product categories. They even apply to marketing cattle.

You **are** selling a brand. In addition to the quality of cattle you are raising, everything you do — from answering the phone to the look of your place when someone pulls in — reflects on your brand.

You **need** to define your brand. Know what you want to represent. If asked today, how would you define it? CAB has a brand platform that serves to define everything from promotional materials to the partners with whom we work:

Certified Angus Beef is the No. 1 Angus beef brand among consumers who want great beef taste without confusion or risk. Compared to all other Angus brands, Certified Angus Beef is a higher grade with consistently better taste, regardless of the cut, simplifying the consumer's beef purchases by assuring an incomparable and memorable beef eating experience every time.

Your brand **must** be consistent. The very nature of a brand requires that you provide consistency to your customers.

While beef animals certainly have their unique differences, some things should not change. Can your customer count on you to condition calves the same every time? Do you inform them of changes to your program?

Your brand **should** represent quality. Well, this one certainly means different things in different product categories, but for us, it's eating quality. Have you taken the steps to ensure your cattle, once finished, will provide the best possible eating experience? A brand is not always a guarantee of good quality. We've all heard of "bargain" brands, the ones people buy only if they can't afford a better brand. What kind of quality does your brand represent?

You **need** an edge. What's your unique selling proposition? What makes your operation different than the one up the road? Is it enough of a difference that I will buy from you or, better yet, spend just a bit more for your cattle? CAB's unique selling proposition is simply the best beef you can buy — every time. Like ours, your unique selling proposition has to be authentic, not some kind of marketing gimmick. The CAB brand has added value because of the 26-year record of performing better than commodity beef.

You **must** critically evaluate your business associates. Be selective in the partners you choose. If we are known by the company we keep, nowhere is that more true than with a brand. Think about the quality of your partners at all levels. Do they elevate your brand? Do you elevate theirs? As a matter of principle, you will never find the CAB brand promoted at low-end retailers.

Your brand **must** stand for integrity. This is the most important of all the defining characteristics. For CAB, it

Notes from the consumer side

Based on a 2002 study by Grocery Manufacturers of America, consumers are twice as likely to choose a brand that is of high quality but costs more (57%) than one of average quality that costs less (28%).

Approximately 76% of Americans in all demographic groups consider a product's brand before making a final selection; 67% would "chase the brand" to a different store if it wasn't available, or do without until the next shopping excursion.

means tracking and monitoring product all the way through the distribution system for authenticity and adherence to quality standards. What does it mean for your operation?

You **must** market your brand. So now, if you've done all of this, customers will form a line at your corral gate. "Just load 'em up, and I'll pay whatever you say." Right? Not exactly. You have to tell people what you're doing and why they should buy from you.

Perhaps you're involved in local cattlemen's groups. Good start. Look for opportunities to get your "brand" out there and to get people to your place. Visit your customers and know their businesses. It's the same with the CAB brand. As good as it is, the product doesn't jump off the shelf into people's carts. In fact, it takes an ongoing marketing effort. CAB combines advertising, public relations, strategic partnerships and account support (customer visits) to create positive effects.

Marketing your brand can seem pretty complex at first, but it's really just common sense. Know what you want to be, do what you say you will do, and tell people what you're doing. Hopefully, your brand will help put more cattle on those trucks at prices you can smile about.



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For a source for recipe ideas, storage and handling tips, restaurant listings, retail store locations, and cooking information, visit www.certifiedangusbeef.com