



# The Front Gate

by **ALLEN MOCZYGEMBA**, CEO, American Angus Association

## Strength comes from adhering to core values

Since beginning my tenure as CEO of the American Angus Association Dec. 1, I've covered a lot of miles — both literally and figuratively. As I write this column during the first week of February, I've been on 45 airline flights in my quest to get acquainted with as many members as possible. I've traveled to a number of member cattle operations, attended cattle sales in four different states, and spent another couple of weeks attending the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) and the Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show in San Diego.

### Shared values

Traveling the country and meeting with the diverse folks who make up our membership has allowed me to recognize three key commonalities. First and foremost is a pride and passion that each of you have in regard to the Angus cattle that you raise. Second is a collective spirit that you share with each other about the Association that serves you. Finally, and most importantly, there's a set of core values that you live

each day that guide your lives and that of your families.

Those core values — honesty, respect and integrity — are absolute and non-negotiable. At the American Angus Association headquarters we share the same core values. In fact, they serve as the foundation of the culture of this organization. Specifically, the core values we follow are:

- **Honesty** — All of our dealings will be done in an honest and transparent manner.
- **Respect** — We'll respect all others and be respectful of different opinions.
- **Integrity** — All of our dealings will be conducted with the highest level of integrity.

These three pillars clearly define our organization. At the same time, these core values create a culture that's both vibrant and empowering. Yet, a culture of empowerment doesn't just happen.

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culture of empowerment. In fact, I made that very point during my interviews with the Board of Directors this past fall — empowerment of individuals within an organization can't occur in the absence of these three essential elements.

A culture of empowerment that is both positive and engaging allows for disagreement — at times strong disagreement — without fear of retribution or ridicule. While it's important to understand what our culture stands for, as Gary Kelly, CEO of Southwest Airlines points out, it is just as important to understand what it does not.

### Importance of culture

Tom Field addressed the importance of culture recently as part of a recurring feature in *The Angus Report* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtc5\\_SuiKyo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtc5_SuiKyo))

titled "Entrepreneurial Minute." Field is the director at the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. As he notes, culture trumps all other aspects of business. We're no different than any other business when it comes to the critical importance of creating a culture of which we all want to be a part and that is representative of the members of this Association.

Finally, these core values of honesty, respect and integrity are absolute in their meaning. They are what we live and breathe every day and must never be allowed to be compromised or set aside for selfish reasons, because our members would expect nothing less from the American Angus Association.



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