



The Front Gate

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

Internal culture

This past November I had the good fortune to become acquainted with Tom Walter. Tom was one of the featured speakers during the 2016 Angus Convention in Indianapolis. If you were able to attend the convention, you had a chance to hear Tom speak on the importance of culture within an organization. In particular, Tom addressed how changing the culture of his family organization, Tasty Catering, had paid dividends exponentially — by improving employee satisfaction, increasing employee performance and ultimately growing their catering business.

Trust is a cornerstone

At the conclusion of his presentation, I had the opportunity to join Tom on stage as part of a panel discussion, which was moderated by Larry Corah of Certified Angus Beef LLC. I made the point during the give-and-take of the panel discussion that an organization's culture is not just

an important aspect of its business; rather, it is *the most* important aspect of any organization and that it cannot be overstated.

Great organizational cultures are built by empowering employees. Yet how does an organization, or for that matter a family cattle operation, empower its employees?

It does so by first creating a work environment that is built upon trust. While we all understand the importance of establishing trust within the workplace, too often managers look at trust only from their position of authority. I contend it's just as important to consider trust from an employee's perspective.

Employees want to trust that when they come to work each day they'll be treated with respect and dignity. In addition, they trust that their role is important and will contribute to the collective success of the organization. That trust can only occur if the employee's role has been clearly

defined and performance expectations are in place that are understood and accountable.

Creating an environment of trust is the first step of building a sense of empowerment within a team.

Transference of power

Along with trust, however, must also come the transference of power and authority. The willingness to transfer power falls solely upon the leadership of an organization. As Tom Walter said in Indianapolis, "The real power of a leader is the transference of power to others."

When leaders are willing to transfer authority and power to employees, those employees become empowered. By becoming empowered, they become emboldened. Emboldened to make decisions on their own that they inherently know, based on their experiences, will be right for the organization. By being empowered, they can make decisions without risk

of being second-guessed. It's not just about making decisions. Emboldened employees are able to voice their differences, when they occur, to their manager without fear of repercussion.

I spend a significant amount of my time focused on creating a culture of empowerment. My friend Tom Walter spends all of his time nurturing and growing his organization's culture. In fact, he's so focused on building the right kind of culture at Tasty Catering that his role is titled chief culture officer.

Our core values — honesty, respect and integrity — serve as the foundation for the culture of the Association. While those three pillars define our organization, they also serve to create an environment of trust and empowerment that makes the whole greater than the individual parts.



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