



CAB Corner on Quality
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Work the *network*

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Networking. It's a term business consultants throw around a lot. Not the kind of networking where we get one computer to talk to another. People networking. In the world of people networking, relationships with trusted contacts are the framework. Those relationships are key to finding the job, getting the meeting, making the sale or keeping the customer.

Maybe you just call it "knowing the right people," but you have to admit, it's important. Especially when you consider that your seedstock operation is in the customer service business.

Commercial bull customers may benefit the most from your network. Our surveys tell us these folks see their seedstock provider as a primary source for "expert information." What an opportunity, if you can deliver the information they need, which includes genetics, health and nutrition. But by far the No. 1 topic is marketing of calves.

Can your network help—do you even have one? You may not be sure, but it's probably more established than you realize. You probably already have a relationship with a feed or animal health company. They usually have technical service representatives available to consult with customers or speak at educational events you might sponsor. Heck, they might even help you sponsor that meeting.

The American Angus Association regional managers (RMs) are a great resource for questions on genetics or EPDs (expected progeny differences). List "your" RM in your newsletters. Invite him to present a session on EPDs at your bull sale. Both the Association's angus.org and CABPartners.com websites are full of information you can pass along to your bull buyers. Through your newsletter, website or other means of communication, you can be a valuable informational resource to your customers.

So what about the idea of networking to help your customers market their calves? This one is a bit more involved, but likely the most valuable for your customers. There are many ways to make this network a reality.

You might start by building a close relationship with your auction market operator. They may be willing to help you organize a special feeder-calf sale or other value-added marketing option. Publicize those sale details to your customers through a newsletter or phone calls. Have a representative from the auction market at your bull sale to build the relationship. He may decide that your cattle offer the best genetics coming through his auction market, and that will reflect well on your customers.

Partner with a pharmaceutical company to add a health information component to your sale. Special sales have been very successful in many parts of the country, but it all depends on the leadership of those organizing. Success won't just occur by itself.

Another great networking step is to build a relationship with a feedlot or two. That may seem like a tough step at first, but CAB has already taken steps to make it easy for you. One of the reasons CAB started the Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) was to help you network. We've identified feedlots looking for Angus feeder calves, committed to managing them for a *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) target and open to data sharing. The CAB website lists all the FLP yards and provides you with overview and contact information.

Start by picking a few yards based on the overview or other positive information and give them a ring. Those that seem most promising are worth a visit, after which at least one manager may agree to come to your sale or even ride around with you and visit your customers.

Yes, they need to work in semi-load lots, but think creatively. Organize your smaller customers with similar calves. Look at options including direct sale or retaining some ownership—partnering is just another form of networking. As that feedlot relationship grows, you can offer educational sessions between your customer and the feedlot discussing performance and carcass traits of their cattle and suggesting change.

AngusSource[®] is another great option for helping your customers. The program could gain your customers a network of hundreds of feedlots seeking AngusSource tagged calves.

CAB staff can also help you and your customers. Whether it takes the form of presenting at an educational event or a more private dinner meeting with some of your key customers, we can help your customer understand how to take advantage of the tremendous demand for CAB. That will help make you the expert they're looking for to guide their business.

Your network may be large or small, but you need to "work it" to make sure it meets your customer needs. As they succeed, so does their supplier.

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