



CAB Corner on Quality
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Preplan your focus

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Time is short for every busy person. While you're going about the business of living and working, it can seem like there aren't enough hours in the day. Just as you can bring more order to your days by planning, you can bring focus to the really big projects by PRE-planning.

The larger the project, the more time and money on the line. You need proactive evaluation and risk assessment. That's true whether you are planning a production sale or looking to the next fiscal year at Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB). On your ranch as in our office, challenges are seasonal and it pays to think at least a year ahead.

Our Value-added Products (VAP) staff at CAB creates a marketing focus for each quarter, involving dozens of products for our thousands of licensees. We brainstorm, consider among the options, design and set up ways to measure return on investment (ROI).

You can probably relate to this as you think about your many bull customers, their cattle and how your products (genetics) can best advance their goals. Like your customers, our licensees are busy with everyday issues and opportunities. Like all of us, their time is limited. They must decide where to focus for the best ROI.

If you have 10 cows or 1,000, you have to think about marketing what you produce. You're trying to retain current customers while attracting the attention and purchasing budget of new ones. The trick is evaluating success.

Look at what you've put into it at every step, knowing what your customers need. They must produce calves (for sale or feeding) that make valuable finished cattle that produce the kind of beef consumers enjoy and tell their friends about. That's where all the money comes from.

You can add value to your relationship with customers by evaluating genetics, nutrition and health programs, keeping in mind their environment.

These concepts of beginning-to-end contribution and evaluation are similar for the VAP division quarterly promotions. As every season begins, we think ahead to what promotions make sense for that season next year. We select a primary focus, develop any marketing materials needed and compile a target list of licensees to approach. That's part of preplanning.

In the business of providing the genetics that drive the beef industry, you're always engaged in preplanning. What sires will you use on the heifer calves from this year's breeding decisions? You're waiting for the latest data to help you and your customers identify the few cows at the bottom, as well as those at the top. To limit risk, you take a balanced approach and include marbling and ribeye, using high-accuracy expected progeny differences (EPDs).

The next step for the VAP team is tracking each quarterly focus opportunity. How are they working for our licensees? We follow up to see how to improve, just as you would check with customers when their cows are pregnancy-tested, at calving and weaning. How can you help them with marketing and feeding to get data and realize top value?

At the end of the day, there's always evaluation. Just because something has "always" been successful doesn't mean it is above regular evaluation. Even the best can be made better.

The VAP division tracks the increase in pounds sold, participating licensees, staff time and budget investment put toward each quarterly focus. That helps us find weak or loose links in the chain, learn from any mistakes and tweak the process before, during and after.

This approach takes time, of course, but that's why we are here, serving the best interests of CAB licensees and Angus producers. The same kind of proactive approach on the ranch adds value to your cattle in the eyes of customers. Together, we reach out more effectively to more customers at every level from pasture to plate.

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