

Market your bull sale through social media



Gone are the days when we can reach the same customers in the same way as our fathers and grandfathers did in the past. Of course, it's incredible when generation after generation attends our bull sale, but there is still a deep need for us to get more people in the production sale seats for our genetics to spread wider each year. Social media is the marketing tool that allows us to display what we are marketing, and also reach people who may never have heard of us before.

If you aren't on social media or don't use Facebook on a regular basis, stick with me as I explain why Facebook, email marketing, and social media are going to become your best friend when you are marketing your upcoming bull sale. Or maybe you don't have a production sale, but you sell breed stock occasionally. Social media and email marketing are certainly still for you. The beauty of social media is that we can reach customers far and wide who are interested in what you

have to offer and they're in the market to buy. In the past, you've likely used traditional methods of advertising like newspaper and radio ads and word of mouth. Many of you may think your bulls and females speak for themselves. Those days certainly aren't over.

Newspaper ads, excellent customers and excellent genetics are still in style. But what if I told you great Facebook advertising can help you narrow down your niche so well we could know exactly how much it would cost for a customer to view a video of a bull on Facebook and then get them to go to your website, sign up to receive a catalogue, show up for a sale, and bid on your bull?

Through Facebook marketing, we are able to track down exactly what it costs for you to get a new customer on your catalog list or someone new in the seats at your bull sale. Now, don't get me wrong, it's not a one stop shop. You can't just throw money behind Facebook advertisements with no plan or preparation and expect guaranteed success. In the last year, the results we have gathered through running ads for our customers have shown us that it costs less than half of a penny to get someone to view a video of one of our customer's featured lots on their Facebook page. Would you pay less than half of a pen-

ny to know that one of your featured high-selling lots was being viewed by more customers, new customers, and getting more exposure than you've ever had before? The answer should be an easy "yes" because there is practically no risk attached at such a small price point.

Going deeper, how much do you think it would cost to get someone off of Facebook onto your website to look at the sale catalog? The current cost to get someone off of Facebook and onto your website to view your catalog is about \$2.50. This is for people who don't have catalogues in their home. These are new customers who have never heard of your bulls or heifers before. They've never been to your production sale and they are viewing your catalogue for the first time. Social media marketing gives us the opportunity to expand your reach, get your name out further and accomplish focused goals using this newer marketing method. This data helps you determine your budget based on your goals.

For example, say you have 10 lots you are going to retain ownership on and you want to sell semen later on throughout the year. We would approach that particular situation differently than if you just want more people showing up the day of the sale or you are selling some bulls outside of your current state. We can utilize Facebook marketing appropriately and specifically for your goals. Consistently posting on your Facebook page two times a week year round will do exponentially more than just sending catalogues to your current or cold customers. You will be able to narrow your audience down to be so specific



Photo Credit: Karoline Rose



Photo Credit: Laney Brentano

that we can target everyone who is-viewing your website, everyone who is viewing your competition's website(s). We can target everyone who interacts with your Facebook page, people who are near your sale location, and much more.

I understand if you still say you are hesitant to use social media in agricultural marketing.

Lots of times people tell me their ideal customer couldn't possibly be on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube. You're probably right. Your current ideal customer might not be found on social media. But their nephew, niece, grandson, granddaughter, son, daughter, etc. are definitely on social media. You are going to be late to the party if you don't start actively using social media in your marketing plan. While the person who writes the check might not be scrolling through their newsfeeds daily, their second-in-command - as I like to call them - is definitely on social media. They see the posts with bulls for sale, or heifers for sale, or upcoming production sales and they relay the message. When that person becomes a decision maker, they are going to go to the ranches they know they can trust. They are going to do business with the operations that have continued to post regularly and share their story on social media. When they are handed the checkbook to start buying hay or when it's their turn to buy semen to breed their bred heifers, they'll think of you. If you don't seize the opportunities now to speak to that target audience, when the time comes that the checkbook is handed over, it's going to be too late.

One of the biggest mistakes I see people make on social media is when a company begins posting when a production sale is coming up, and then they disappear from their followers feeds until the next production sale approaches. This might seem like a good idea, but it would be better to never post at all than to post sporadically when you think it will benefit you most.

Now it's time to bring up the Facebook algorithm, which may sound like a foreign term, but is simply put: how Facebook prioritizes what it shows it's navigator or consumer. The algorithm understands when a business page only posts right before a sale and it will actually not show most, or any, of your posts to your customers. If you have a production sale in the Spring and you only post the two months leading up to the production sale, you really would be better off without a page at all. But don't take that as justification not to utilize this amazing tool we have in front of us. You should, instead, post continuously year round in order to feed to that algorithm and to hit its marks in order for your posts to be seen. You will get more traction if you're posting shareable content. Have an attractive cover photo so people know exactly who you are when they get to your business page.

Not only does the Facebook algorithm analyze when and how often you post, it also prioritizes content by 1st: Live Video, 2nd: Regular Video, 3rd: Pictures, 4th: Text, and 5th: Links. This means you need to post live and regular video often to guarantee better exposure. It can be scary going live on Facebook, I get it, but it is the best thing you can do. Take out a tripod and camera (or just your phone), or set up your computer and film something to share with your audience. When you share regular video make sure to use the actual video file.

Sharing a YouTube link instead of a video file hides you in the Facebook algorithm because it would take a user outside of Facebook when they select

it. Having the video file also attracts the attention of people who may not have initially noticed or clicked on the link. For example, a basic video of your replacement heifer calves, bred heifers or bred cows could be seen by 20,000 people instead of the traditional 5 to 10 local buyers. When done right, social media has the ability to add value simply by increasing interest in cattle, which makes it a more competitive market.

I am sure some of you are probably thinking there is no way you have enough content to post three times a week year round, but I can promise you with some strategic planning and taking lots of pictures and videos with your phone, you will have a ton of valuable content. You might not realize it, but you are always doing exciting things on the ranch that your customers absolutely want to see. You move a bull, rotate your pastures, you're hauling hay, or delivering bulls to customers. These are all great opportunities to snap some pictures and show your ideal customer what happens on the ranch so they will gain the know, like and trust factor with you.

Cattle marketing is an ever-changing field. Bids on calves are only good for an hour instead of for weeks like they were decades ago. The competition is greater and more saturated, but this gives you the opportunity to set yourself apart and showcase your cattle and operation. Think outside of the box as you analyze your marketing plan for this year. What are you doing to make your cattle stand out from your neighbors? The options continue to grow.

--Karoline Rose, owner of KRose Company, is passionate about helping small business owners live a life by their own design. Living a life they design means getting away from constantly checking emails and lightening the immense pressure to come up with daily content to post everyday on social media. She created the KRose company to help solve small business owner's biggest pinpoint struggles.

Born and raised in Three Forks, Montana, Karoline is a proud Montana State University alumna with a bachelor's degree in Animal Science. Though she still loves spending time on the ranch, she has also developed expertise in Facebook, Instagram, and email marketing strategies and execution. You can find her with a cup of creamy coffee, spending time with her nearby nephew and taking pictures of sunrises and sets. She loves being with her family, but also finds passion working with people to help them build the lives they've always wanted.

