

The Importance of Networking

As a kid growing up, I heard “network.” Make sure you network while you are on your trip. While in middle school and high school, I always thought to myself, “Why do I need to network? I am 15 years old. I don’t need to know that many people, just my friends.”

Little did I know, networking is one of the most important things you can do through your youth. Networking is especially important by the time you finish college. First, we have to figure out what networking really is and how to properly network. Then there are so many benefits from networking like getting jobs, winning scholarships and marketing your livestock.

Networking defined

So what is networking exactly? Networking is defined as “an

interaction with other people to exchange information and develop contacts, especially to further one’s career.” The definition is pretty simple: meeting people to help you in your future.

What are some key things to remember when trying to network? My first suggestion is always to use a good, firm handshake with eye contact. The first impression is a lasting one, so why not make it the best that it can be. When you are meeting someone for the first time, don’t forget to smile. A simple smile will always cheer someone up and help you ease into a good conversation.

The next tip for being successful while networking is sharing your passion. The majority of the people that I have networked with in my life have been from the ag community, and they have the same passion about livestock that I do. Having a well-rounded conversation is easy to have.

The fourth tip is don’t be afraid to just talk. I promise if you want to meet someone and feel as if they will be able to help you at some point in your career, try to start a conversation with them. If they just turn the other way and won’t talk and mingle with you, trust me, you do not need them in your networking circle. Finally, don’t forget to follow up. It never hurts to ask him/her the best way to stay in touch or simply ask, “May I have your e-mail or phone number in case I have a question?”

Networking matters

Now that you know what networking is and a few “how-to” tips to remember, next comes the big question: What can networking really do for me? Right now in my life is where all the time I have networked should pay off. I will be graduating from college this spring, and I will be looking for a “big

boy” job. Personally, this is the most important part about networking, helping me find the perfect job.

Over the years that I have been involved in the livestock industry, I have met a lot of people, and I hope one day that I will be able to call someone that I met and ask them for a reference or help in setting up an interview. This goes back to my other point: never be afraid to ask someone to put in a good word for you or for their help.

The next key goal that you should take away from networking is obtaining scholarships. You all know that college isn’t cheap and that every penny helps. Networking is a huge way to help receive scholarships. If you meet a leader in your community or in the ag field, he/she could possibly write you a great letter of recommendation, while you are applying for a scholarship.

The third and final goal that you should take away from networking is selling and buying cattle. The more people you know will make marketing your cattle easier. For example, if you met the owner of an operation and know that he loves dark red, goggled-eyed bulls and you have one for sale, you could give him a call and let him know what you have for sale. Since I am a college student on a budget, I cannot attend every sale. Therefore, if I see a heifer that I am interested in, I will call someone that I have networked with to take a look for me.

As you can tell, networking is something that you should all take seriously, no matter your age. So the next time you are at a cattle show or an event, don’t be afraid to go up to someone that you don’t know and just talk to them. Give that person a firm handshake with eye contact and smile. You never know; one day that person might be your boss or, possibly, a buyer at your bull sale. **HW**



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