

Communication's Corner | Start with Why

by Kendra Davis

I read a book recently by Simon Sinek titled “*Start With Why*.” In the book Sinek uses real-world examples to demonstrate how great leaders in history used communication in different ways than what we naturally assume is the “right” way of reaching our customers.

The basic principle Sinek uses to convey his message is that if you or your company wants to inspire others, you should always communicate “why” first, then follow-up with “how” and “what.”

In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. gave what would be known as one of the most famous speeches of all time, “I Have a Dream,” in front of 250,000 people. Why was this speech so influential not only during the civil rights movement but also to U.S. history itself?

Many Americans were fighting for civil rights at that time, so what made MLK different from those individuals? Why did so many follow him instead of other leaders? He had a dream, he had beliefs and he shared them with people who became his followers. But they weren't following MLK himself; they were following his dreams and beliefs. They were following his “why.”

Not what, but why

After reading the book, I realized how true this concept is in the cattle industry. Cattlemen should start with “why” when discussing their livestock. Customers are more likely to buy cattle from a program in which they believe. It is really easy to talk about the cattle themselves, but why are you in business? Why do you raise Herefords?

In his book Sinek says, “People don't buy what you do; they buy

why you do it.” This could not be truer in the cattle business, especially when it comes to developing repeat customers. Think about it — why do people continually buy their cattle from the same place? Yes, they most likely factor in things like genetics and structure. However, when it comes down to the final decision-making factor on where to buy the year's bulls or replacement females, the decision is often based mostly on the “why” of the operation.

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— Simon Sinek

As time goes on, customers get to know the people behind the cattle they purchase. More importantly, the buyer starts to understand why the producers make certain decisions. It makes buyers more comfortable with making purchases, especially if the farm or ranch exemplifies similar beliefs to their business.

But what if you could share your “why” without customers having to figure it out by themselves? When talking about your business, start with “why.” Tell prospective customers why you do what you do. Tell them what you believe in when it comes to your farm or ranch, and tell them what you aspire to do in the future.

If customers understand the “why” behind the operation, their purchasing decision will be that much easier. Remember, people don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it.

Goals

The goal of this column is to provide Hereford breeders with different techniques and ideas behind communications and marketing. The American Hereford Association (AHA) has numerous resources available that should be utilized to their fullest potential.

Both communications and marketing are great tools to use within your operation, whether you have five cows or 500 cows. There are many ways to reach your target audience, so you have to find the channel that works best for you and use it. What works for one person may not necessarily work for others, and that is OK. The communications team at AHA is here to help you discover more about your “how,” “what” and, most importantly, your “why.”

Homework

If you are familiar with TED Talks, you may have seen Sinek's talk “How Great Leaders Inspire Action.” The video is the third most popular TED Talk of all time and now has more than 38 million views. If you don't have time to read Sinek's book, I highly encourage you to take 18 minutes of your day to watch the video, which gives a brief summary of the mantra behind his book. If you are anything like me, you will walk away from it with a whole different perspective on how you communicate with others about your business. **HW**

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