

by Kendra Davis

## The Social Generation

Studies show more and more young individuals are stepping up and helping with the marketing and promotion of farms and ranches. How can you implement the younger generation in your operation?

### Backed by facts

First, let us clarify all the generational definitions out there. BOOMXY includes Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials, aged 24 to 74 years old. Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to the 18- to 23-year-old demographic. That is right; there are people out there who are younger than Millennials — I happen to be one of them.

A study done by Osborn & Barr, a full-service advertising agency in Kansas City, Mo., found when it comes to promotional messaging, Gen Z individuals rely less on print and more on ag radio, social networks and advice from other farmers.

The study goes on to show that Gen Z individuals are watching more network and cable TV, utilizing more social media and downloading more ag-related smartphone apps. One thing which may surprise people is Gen Z individuals are more likely to ask for advice from another farmer. They

are also more likely to listen to more ag and rural radio stations.

It is no surprise that BOOMXY individuals continue to favor print publications, network radio and manufacturer websites. However, I still believe it is important to note not all individuals interact in the same way.

### Social media minded

While social media platforms like Instagram are experiencing large growth, Facebook is still the powerhouse when it comes to the ag industry. As of July 2018, Facebook recorded more than 2.23 billion monthly active users, according to Zephoria Digital Marketing and Pew Research Center. The most common age group on the platform is the 25- to 34-year-olds, accounting for 29.7 percent of total users.

Overall, 46 percent of all farmers in America — nearly 1.5 million — use Facebook, while 25 percent currently use Instagram. Only 9 percent of rural Americans use Twitter; however, this audience is made up of some very loyal followers. One platform many do not think of is YouTube. With nearly 51 percent of farmers utilizing the platform, it is one of the largest platforms for the demographic.

### So, what now?

When you start to think about it, who are the best people to reach a certain age group? Most likely, the members of each age group are most knowledgeable about their respective age group. That is where the younger generation can help with an operation's marketing plan.

Being they use it the most, Millennials and Gen Z individuals can play a large part in a farm's or ranch's social media presence. It is important to start allowing the younger generation to help with marketing and advertising to help them feel included. It is a huge advantage to have the perspective of a few people in different age categories working on a marketing plan.

Incorporating different things that are unique to an age group can be very effective. Starting a social media page and posting content on it is one of the first steps. Whether you are writing your own posts or sharing someone else's, they will help you develop a presence. Using Facebook ads can also be very effective. Facebook ads can reach a large number of people for a very reasonable dollar amount. Just make sure you are setting the correct target audience. Videos generally reach more people on platforms like Facebook, and statistics show live video reaches even more.

The key to using social media and allowing the younger generation to step up and be a part of it is to get started. Millennials and Gen Z individuals are most likely already using social media — you do not want to miss the opportunity to connect with them. **HW**

### First-hand testimonial: Rylee Barber

As I was growing up, my role in the family operation was to be outside feeding cows, riding horseback and helping with my show cattle. I was not involved in anything more than the day-to-day operations. Now as I am getting closer to finishing my undergraduate degree in agricultural communications and journalism from Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, my role has switched. I am no longer on-site to do the day-to-day tasks I could when I was younger. Now my responsibility is to expand our presence on social media. Our family operation's social media was typically all about featuring up-and-coming sale lots. That is a key aspect in marketing your operation, but where I have come into play is adding the extra stuff when it is not sale season. Studies have shown people do not want to be sold something all the time. It is good to mix up content on social media with the number of sales and "fun" pictures. **HW**

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