

A Memorable Message

An elderly homeless man is whittling a replica of the dirty yellow Labrador sitting next to him. You can tell by the dusting of snow on the sidewalk, the decorations adorning the streets and the people with armfuls of shopping bags hustling past the elderly man that the Christmas season is in full swing.

A young girl and her mother walk by, and the man makes eye contact with the girl. The elderly man lends the girl a small smile, and she returns it. She approaches him and eyes the wooden dog sitting in the man's hands; he gives it to her. As she looks at it with curiosity as to why the man would give her one of the only things he owned, her mother informs her it is time to leave, and they walk away.

Later, the man is sleeping on the sidewalk next to the dog, a small bag of his few possessions resting against the cold brick wall. The little girl sneaks over to where he is and sets a laptop and a projector on the ground, turns them on, and an image of a huge Christmas tree shines on the wall. She and her mother, along with a few other people, place beautifully wrapped gifts under the tree on the wall for the homeless man. The little girl wakes him up to show him the creation, and the scene ends with her smiling, holding his hand as tears stream down his face.

Make it memorable

'Tis the season for kindness, generosity and heartwarming commercials on television. The scene described above was a commercial I remember from the 2017 holiday season. I'm not sure whether it was the homeless

man, the little girl or even the dog that made the commercial so memorable, but whatever it was, the commercial did exactly what it was supposed to do.

I'm guessing it's safe to say you have advertisements that stay in your mind from year to year, as well. Maybe it's the homeless man, or maybe it's the Coca-Cola polar bears or the Hershey's Kisses that play jingle bells. All of these ads serve a purpose — to grab your attention and to stick in your mind. If they can do that for a year, they have gone above and beyond what they were supposed to do. They also tell a story.

When you are deciding what to write on your social media feed during the holidays or in your family Christmas letter, are you being genuine and trying to relate to your audience? Or are you simply writing something generic?

When individuals scroll through their social media feeds or browse through Christmas letters, certain things definitely stand out, and certain things definitely do not. What stands out in your mind? Would you rather see a photo and a caption that simply says, "Merry Christmas?" Or, would you rather read about a favorite memory surrounding the holidays accompanied by a wish that you find the same type of joy over the holiday season?

Application

If you have the time and the ability, you could make a short video to post for your audience. If not, a photo and a heartwarming message is always a great idea, too. Maybe you have a favorite holiday recipe to share a couple

of weeks before Christmas; maybe it's a photo of you and your family decorating your Christmas tree with a message about why it is such a special time. Whatever it is, make it personal and relatable. Give people something to think about and to respond to. Building engagement on a single post helps to build engagement on your entire page. The holidays are a great time to do this because there are so many things you can talk about.

Remember, even though most of you are posting on behalf of a farm or ranch, the content does not always need to relate to cattle. There are so many other things that go into your operation. Family, traditions and the property itself are just a few things that can be made personable and relatable. Once people get to know you, what you believe in and what you stand for, the more likely they will want to get to know your cattle as well. Post things that make them feel included in your operation and entice them to come back for more.

I hope you will take these things into account when you are planning your holiday social media and customer outreach. I am excited to see what you come up with. As always, please reach out to me with any questions or comments you may have. I hope everyone has a very safe and very merry Christmas and a healthy and happy new year. **HW**

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