

'The Brand' Session Preview: THE POWER OF MEAT

by Kendra Davis



The Brand" Marketing Summit will provide an opportunity to learn from fellow Hereford breeders and industry experts. One industry expert from whom The Brand participants can expect to hear is Anne-Marie Roerink, founder of 210 Analytics LLC. Through countless consumer studies, Roerink has developed an excellent perspective on the ever-changing wants and needs of the consumer. She understands the challenges and opportunities in the food business today as well as the drivers of success tomorrow.

I sat down with Roerink for an interview about how Herefords fit into the meat industry. Read below for more information.



Q How did you get to where you are today?

A Even as a kid, I think I drove my parents absolutely crazy by eternally asking, "Why? Why, mom, why?" I don't think anybody was surprised that I ended up being a market researcher. At the end of the day, I absolutely love understanding how people shop, how they eat, how they live and how it impacts who's retailing and the meat industry specifically. [I am] absolutely a grocery geek at heart.

Q What exactly is "The Power of Meat?"

A "The Power of Meat" is a very unique and in-depth study of the state of the meat industry. We all know ultimately our fate in our industry is decided by how the consumer spends [money/time?] — that's why the bulk of "The Power of Meat" looks at consumer behavior. We also make sure that we tell the actual sale side of the story as well — it shows the full 360 of our world.



Q How did the study begin and why did you decide to do it?

A I vividly remember the meeting planners for the Annual Meat Conference coming to me and saying, "You know, as producers, packer processors, retailers, we all have data about how we're doing in terms of sales, but ultimately, that only tells a little bit of the story. What can we do to give the industry some tools to really understand why the consumer is doing what they're doing in the meat case?" That's really where "The Power of Meat" came from all those years ago. It's really developed [into] almost the bible of the meat industry. Every single year we look at new topics, little dots on the horizon, that might or may not be something that we need to start paying attention to.

Q Why do you think variety is so important for the consumer in today's market?

A When people are out eating dinner, that's the kind of experience they want to recreate at home as well. But then, at the same time, we're struggling with some of the younger consumers who don't know about meat as well as the Boomer shoppers and are not as comfortable preparing all these different cuts. To me, that is actually a massive opportunity for the meat industry and the beef industry, specifically, to help create the variety people are craving to make sure they don't go to restaurants or go to plant-based meat alternatives.

Q Where does Certified Hereford Beef® fit in?

A I think, actually the last couple of years and going forward. It's a better opportunity than we've seen in a long, long time. What we're seeing among Millennials is that while they are not brand loyal at center store, they are actually much more brand and breed loyal in the meat case. The reason for that is because they don't know as much about meat, especially beef, and so they equate a certain eating experience with a brand. I think the *Certified Hereford Beef* program is one of the great opportunities for retailers and food service alike to educate consumers about the flavor, marbling [and] how you cook [beef] for your best eating experience. And what happens is, when shoppers have had that great eating experience, they come back and want just Hereford beef — just beef from the program — and believe that's their key to success.

Q What can Hereford producers do specifically to promote Hereford beef?

A Whether it's an actual breed or an actual brand, it all comes down to building a differentiated story in the minds of the consumer. We hear this term "transparency" a lot, and to me, that's a fancy marketing way to say, "Consumers want to know more about where their food comes from? Who raised it? Where was it raised? How were the animals treated?" Specific to Hereford, it's a lesser-known breed, but certainly by being able to talk about the flavor profile, the marbling, what is unique about [the breed]. I always stress to producers that it's not just about the features. If we're able to tell our story in terms of a benefit, I think we have a massive win on our hands.

Q When it comes to other protein sources, how should we position ourselves to compete with them?

A I'm actually a big believer of a rising tide lifts all boats. What is happening in the grocery store right now is a lot of other categories are starting to, or have been, feeling our protein thunder if you will. We have things like peanut butter and granola bars and protein shakes. Really, every category around the store has massive protein call-outs

except for the meat department. Our first charge as the meat and poultry industry needs to be making sure we keep meat on the center of plates of most consumers. Making sure people understand the nutrient density, and the benefits of having meat and protein on the plate is incredibly important. Then from there, the second charge will be all about making sure we keep beef and Hereford beef front and center by, of course, competing with our competition in that area. To me, the first battle needs to be about keeping protein on the plate.

Q How can Hereford producers encourage shoppers to buy outside of their normal buying habits?

A Meat's biggest enemy is routine. We've all been there. Saturday morning the grocery trip rolls around, and whether you write out your meat purchases or not, you typically end up buying the same items you buy all the time. Figuring out a way to break through routine is incredibly important, and by doing that, you just have to find a way to get into people's mind as you're planning those dinners.

Q What is your session at The Brand Marketing Summit going to cover?

A I'm very much looking forward to sharing as much as I know about meat and beef and Hereford beef. But I always encourage people to have their questions ready for me because, to me, any good presentation means I learn as much from the audience as they learn from me. For the most part, we're going to cover how meat and beef and Hereford beef really fit into people's changing food culture. Then how people are shopping is changing drastically, and how can we benefit from that as an industry.

Q What are you most excited to share with participants at "The Brand"?

A Ultimately, I think our success is based on understanding the consumer the best way possible. If we understand how the consumer wants to vote with his wallet and play into that, then we all win. **HW**