

Spring Cleaning Tips for Ag Professionals

Steps for better leadership by this summer.

If you're ready for spring cleaning, you may want to start differently this year. Consider forgoing (or putting off) the usual window washing or shop organizing in favor of doing an update on your farm or ranch brand for maximum leadership impact. I recently had the opportunity to have that discussion while leading a session at Top Producer Summit 2022 in Nashville, Tenn. During the Executive Women in Agriculture (EWA) breakout, the participants and I in the "Rockstar Female Farmer/Rancher Panel" discussed how to power up your presence. These ladies, who all raise row crops or cattle or work with ranch customers, provided incredible tips and candid conversation.

One: Identify your area of impact and take steps to own it

When you're ready to step into leadership, whether it's association work or around the ranch, you must own it. Naomi Blohm, Total Farm Marketing senior market advisor, did that when she made the decision to learn about grain marketing and lead that charge for her family in her early 20s. She made market advising into a 20-year career.

Now, she advises producers all over North America on grain marketing and keeps them from being too attached to their "bushel babies."

Rena Striegel, owner of Transition Point Business Advisors, a consultancy

based in Iowa serving farm families as they navigate succession planning, left India to come home to Iowa. When she left, Rena had an interesting and lucrative career traveling the world; yet she returned to work with families like hers that needed help, support and a moderator to work through an operation's transitions. Speaking of which, your farm would likely benefit from such conversations, so feel free to give her a call.

Two: Become a connector and a resource

EWA panelists included April Hemmes. April is a farmer from Iowa and a woman you would never call a "farmer's wife" because her husband doesn't work on the farm — she does. April believes in the power of using the resources at hand.

"Never did I think I would need an executive coach because I am, 'just a farmer.' But, it has really helped me in my leadership," she said after using an executive coach in 2020 when she was named *Farm Journal's* Trailblazer.

Being a connector is also a role that Maggie Holub of Nebraska plays for her community.

Maggie not only farms and raises livestock but also works as a relationship manager for Farm Credit Services of America. Mostly, she identifies herself as a fitness professional.

"I actively teach BodyPump group fitness classes at two different fitness facilities, two days a week. I also have a fitness trailer I pull around to small rural towns to bring fitness to local farming communities that would not have access to it otherwise," she says. It's hard to convince people to work out, outside of farm labor — now that is leadership!

Three: Clean up your online presence

Has it been a while since you updated your Twitter profile? Does your Facebook look as tired as last year's work boots? It's time to refresh the page and remove dated content or sensitive viewpoints to give your online presence a boost for more impact. With your profile looking sharp, the message you want to communicate is conveyed so much easier.

Yes, we're coming into spring planting, haymaking and calf weaning but use those wait times on the end rows or between putting up bales to take your leadership and online platforms to the next level. **HW**

Sarah Beth Aubrey is an entrepreneur and founder of Aubrey Coaching and Training (ACT). She can be reached at sarah@sarahbethaubrey.com.

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