

Cave Images Just Can't Compete with Cell Phone Text

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Insight into the cattle industry is keen, but, as a producer, the ability to make use of that insight and convert that understanding to real impact is critical. The American Angus Association (<http://www.angus.org>) sponsored an effort to help categorize the many varied forms of producer managerial thoughts to produce a document that would be an excellent starting point for further discussion and understanding of the business we often simply refer to as “beef.”

The initial outcome of that effort was the publication “Priorities First: Identifying Management Priorities in the Commercial Cow-Calf Business.” The document was summarized and authored by Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colo. Field notes from the beginning that “for many cow-calf producers, the information age has spawned a massive flow of data and technical communications that borders on the unmanageable.”

The use of the term “borders” by Field may be a bit of an understatement. Information overload is critical, often reaching total burnout.

The symptoms are not so evident. A common outcome of information overload is disengagement, resulting in the lack of understanding, utilization and incorporation of technology or managerial processes that would improve the operation.

When this sort of overload happens, it is easy to return to the coffee table and talk in terms of the past instead of the future. Life simply goes on without change.

Not adjusting to change could, in fact, be perceived as a Neanderthal attitude, which leads one to be misinformed, resistant to change and perhaps somewhat stuck in the mud, much like the early cave dwellers. But rest assured, even then information was passed on, even though it may have been only a chiseled drawing on a remote cave wall.

Information overload has many functions, but never should be set aside on the premise that enough is enough.

For me, a real case in point occurred when I went to add another line to our family’s cell phone plan.

As the children grow, the norm is quickly becoming total cell phone availability on a 24/7 basis, with no excuses. As the plan was reviewed, a newer plan was available that included unlimited text messaging.

For those who don’t want to understand, have another cup of coffee, but I should warn you, the newer generation can communicate from a 1-inch by 1-inch keypad faster than I can talk on the phone. If we are to stay competitive, there better be someone on our side that is good at text messaging, enjoys very hot, flavored coffees, but still can feed a cow.

So much for rambling. Field is right. We need to understand industry priorities and develop a framework from which to build.

Not long ago, we had a good discussion involving the future of the animal industry published in the “Choices” journal (Volume 21, No. 3, 2006, <http://www.choicesmagazine.org>). In that discussion, BeefTalk focused on cattle and the future. Likewise, the publication “Priorities First” can serve as a similar template to allow for the sharing and deciphering of the findings of the group and use it as a means to keep moving.

The cave dwellings were good, the drawings not bad, either, but the coffee was awful. Today, the coffee certainly has improved, but the drawings are not so simple. On top of that, if those hard, callused hands can even hold a phone, getting one’s fingers to actually hit only one cell phone key at a time is a miracle.

Yet, it makes no difference, it’s time. Enjoy the ride and look at some of the priorities. See what the future really has to say.

More later. May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colorado