

Australian Farmers: its time to get strategic online



“Do what you feel in your heart to be right, for you’ll be criticised anyway” Eleanor Roosevelt

In every moment of disaster there is a hope. 2018 will be known for many things. For Qld Farmers it will be a defining period of time as the reality of the changes made to Vegetation Management Act 1999, amended for the 19th time, are realised.

Brigid Price from Rural Resources Online a mother to the future Farming Generations is calling on all farmer to act and get strategic in sharing thier message online.

The biggest let down of all Being a resilient bunch, farmers look out for each other and don’t have time to play games. Country values have stood the test of time and while others were carrying on with their politics, farmers and graziers got on with the job of providing world class produce.

As a minority however, it seems it was only a matter of time before the very people entrusted by all Queenslanders do the right thing have sold the bush out for political payback.

An attitude adjustment But now is not the time to vent.

Reactive actions will achieve far less than proactive planning that is strategically implemented.

Farming is a business. Great products don't sell themselves they need good marketing and PR. So if you are a primary producer what can you do to sell Queensland farmers as the true environmentalists doing the right thing by their land and animals?

The good news is there is a great opportunity to harness and unite those involved in Agriculture. Just as the Greens and Labor have put aside differences to achieve their political objective so too can the supporters of Ag.

It's time to tell stories Who better to tell our stories then us?

For many it involves stepping out of comfort zones. Don't think of it as self promotion but rather what is needed to engage city consumers.

The goal is simple. We need to get our city friends back on board so they are telling the Government to 'leave the farmers alone'.

Our voice must be united and our message clear.

The online world interacts differently. Communication is through hashtags and headlines.

We are an #agfamily. We need to get strategic, come up with a game plan and share it openly.

Farmers will lose nothing by keeping the process open and transparent.

It will be our defining difference between green lobby groups, green political parties and the Labor Government.

Coming from strong foundations we will adapt with assistance.

Importantly, define our Industry values Honesty - Farmers are doing the right and therefore have nothing to hide

Transparency – Open dialogue with city consumers about why and how we do things

Future focused – Consumers need to know our vision. As an industry we recognise that poll cattle are better off than horny cattle. We are using genetics to help assist us to breed hornless cattle.

Integrity – we are proud to grow world class food and fibre that reflects our strong morals. We do not sell anything we would not feed our family.

Family focused – we are maintaining and growing our business for the future generations to also be custodians of the land for their children

Compassion – we have a deep connection to both the land and animals we make a living from

Good manners – in all our interactions we show respect for others

Agriculture's secret weapon The image of the old Akubra wearing farmer is iconic but outdated.

Agriculture in Australia embraces technology, works tirelessly to meet best practice standards and can proudly open it's doors to anyone.

It's time to set the record straight and create an online farmers market of sorts where city voters and farmers can interact.

There is a need to upskill in marketing and public relations basics and get involved in social media beyond the personal level.

It's not simply about creating a platform for the city to come to the country. There are so many interest groups already operating. We need to join them and become their unofficial ag spokesperson.

With the average age of rural landholders approximately 68 the thought of this for them is overwhelming.

Currently women are highest users of the internet and social media platforms in Australia.

Rural women are passionate, used to multi-tasking, not afraid to try new things and #tellitlikeitis.

Now is the time for them to step up and shine.

New rules of engagement As a community we need a plan. City consumers are busy people they don't want to be bombarded with statics they just their expectations met and their fears allayed.

One of my most important roles is that of a mother to three children. I am also a friend, community member and small business owner. My interactions

on social media are mindful of these roles.

The messages I give my children and how I represent my business, in alignment with my personal values, are clearly defined and used as benchmark for my behaviour.

Good manners and meaningful conversation that is respectful and factual is my preferred approach.

Social media provides an opportunity to engage but it also opens individuals up to personal attack.

When I am reviewing others behaviour I look at both the context and intent behind their actions. Online it is hard to sometimes read the tone of a comment. I keep my approach simple.

I acknowledge and sometimes thank the person for their question.

Why?

Because we need open discussion that shows we are approachable. Politicians are very good at having an online presence but did you notice most post content but do not engage with people who comment or ask questions?

I engage or respond to questions and where necessary I try to provide a future vision for them visualise.

For example dehorning is performed for the safety of other animals and people. The beef industry is using genetic testing to identify polled, or hornless genes that will enable us to breed cattle with no horns.

Why do I do this?

Because of my values of integrity and honesty. What better way to demonstrate this then engaging with consumers of genuine interest in our industry.

Social media use needs an understanding of social licence. As representatives of the agriculture in Australia you must understand this is what you are online.

Understand the big picture At times this approach means stepping away from the online world and taking a deep breath before composing my response.

And that's ok.

Because although human I am aware farming is our business and when online I am also representing our Industry.

There are times I want to type 'are you serious', but I do not.

There are times I want to say far worse. I am human and when my family and friends are attacked it hurts.

Farmers wear many hats. When online I wear my business hat.

We should not assume the misinformation others quote is intentional. We have to be prepared to explain why, what and how we do things.

I know enough to realise there are strategies being played by others. Not everyone who posts online uses their own name or engages for meaningful conversations.

And that's ok.

My response is not written for them. It is written as a mother, friend and small business owner. Life is too short to play games, so I don't.

But telling it like it is I can. If you would like to tell your story to please send it to us to share

About Brigid Price and Rural Resources Online – Brigid Price is an organic beef producer near Injune in Queensland.

She is also the founder of Rural Resources Online – a seminal website for the rural sector that draws together tools, wisdom and stories for Australia's vast community of primary producers.

For further information or to interview Brigid Price, contact:

Linda Reed-Enever at ThoughtSpot PR: 0433 149 319 or Brigid Price directly at on 0439 575 092

Contacts

Linda Reed-Enever

0433149319

mailto: linda@lindareedenever.com.au