

## **Gabriel Connealy Essay:**

The first 18 years of my life have been spent on my family's Angus ranch in the middle of the remote Nebraska Sandhills. As I've grown and matured, I've taken many lessons from the ranch, ranging from agricultural practices to people skills, and all within the context of a successful, ethical business.

Every spring, my family holds one of the largest purebred Angus bull sales in the nation. As with any type of auction, an expensive item creates excitement for everyone in attendance, and can greatly affect the remainder of the sale. Among Angus circles, it is common knowledge that not every animal sold through every bull sale is legitimate. Some operations create this false buzz by rigging their sales, and thus falsely inflating their prices, sometimes by tens of thousands of dollars. At a very young age, I was told that this deceitful behavior was considered unethical and would never be tolerated on our ranch.

In the bull business, nothing is certain. Ranchers never know if the grass will grow as well one year as it did the last. Cattle prices rise and fall. Bulls don't stay healthy. Therefore, another unique aspect of my family's bull sale is our guarantee. We stand behind our bulls, and assure our customers that if the bull is injured, dies, or is found to be infertile; we will replace the animal or issue a refund. Because this policy has been invoked over and over again for many decades, our customers know that we are accountable.

My family takes great pride in our work. The fact that our product is used nationally and even internationally is a tribute to our hard work and dedication to the business. As the bull sale nears each spring, my father receives hundreds of phone calls from interested buyers wanting more information. Although it may cost him a sale, I've heard many times when he will dissuade a buyer from a certain animal because the characteristics of that bull may not fit the individual's cowherd. He is far more concerned about his honest assessment for each customer, an attribute that has given our operation a reputation for integrity over the years.

Ethical business practices are not merely the morally correct thing to do; they are the singularly most important aspect of a successful business. Perhaps the Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson said it best when he stated, "If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters."