

VIDEO VOYAGER

By Amy Blum

Seeking a college degree after high school wasn't on the radar for Justin Dikoff of Faulkton, S.D., but that didn't mean higher education wasn't in his cards.

Dikoff knew he would always be involved in the livestock industry. However, he couldn't foresee the direction his path would take. With a background in the purebred industry, an auctioneer's certificate and a desire to learn, Dikoff found a fit at DVAuction, an online marketing service specializing in real-time internet livestock sales.

"I was so lucky to get involved with DVAuction when I did," the father of three says. "Seven years ago technology was still viewed as a fad to lots of people; I was not a particularly tech-savvy person! But, booking sales, videoing animals and working with our customers has been a game-changer for me."

DVAuction was established in 1999, and Dikoff's father—Rodney—utilized the service for the family's production sales; this is where Dikoff first met and worked with DVAuction owner Dan Broz.

With Dikoff's familiarity from the customer side, learning the business side of DVAuction proved educational in the best of ways.

"I've had such a unique opportunity to see behind the curtains at operations around the country," Dikoff says. "Our clients have taught me so much, and that type of sharing has helped me professionally and personally as I've built my career and our cowherd."

To further strengthen the family's ties to DVAuction, Dikoff's wife Nicole joined the company as a video editor. Nicole has a background in elementary education and has developed a keen eye for cattle and a creative mind for video work according to her husband.

"We are so blessed to have such a great team at DVAuction," Dikoff says. "I work with this awesome set of folks all dedicated to serving our customers at the highest level. Our team of programmers, tech support and office support is the backbone of our company. They are the only reason I can do my job the way I do."

A good one's a good one no matter the breed, and working with DVAuction means getting to see great cattle of all breeds and work with some of the best producers out there.

Justin Dikoff

From the perfect video pen to the best angles, there is an art to videoing livestock with an animal's best attributes and a producer's goals in mind, according to Dikoff. Yet, Dikoff has most importantly learned the power of building relationships.

"The part that makes what I do so cool is knowing people don't just hire us to video cattle; they hire us to share in their livelihood and maintain or create relationships with the people who support this industry," Dikoff says.

He continues, "Technology is changing our industry in so many ways—ways that are really valuable to each of us in the system, but customer service and relationships remain a No. 1 priority. People buy from people they trust, and a huge part of my livelihood is reinforcing a producer's trustworthiness with my own."

Dikoff has seen technology transform livestock marketing, and he foresees aspects of traditional marketing becoming obsolete as buyers become conditioned to new communication methods. But, there remains one aspect Dikoff can't imagine the industry without.

"At the end of the day, selling cattle—be it bulls, heifers, beef, whatever—is all about people," he says. "The methods we use to connect and communicate will continue to change. But, there's no way to make any of this work without people. Helping sellers maintain or reinforce a human connection remains one of my job's most difficult yet important responsibilities."

According to Dikoff, the human component is also what makes DVAuction so successful. He has come to know the many working parts required to run such an intricate business, and he credits working for such a "well-oiled machine maintained by great people" as an inspiration to his work.

While Dikoff prioritizes the human side of his work, he doesn't discount the importance of quality livestock, and in his travels throughout the region, he's had the opportunity to see some of the best.

"Marketing livestock is an aggressive business," Dikoff says. "I've been able to interact with a variety of operations, each one with their own goals and target audience. The common theme with each client though is their dedication to constantly improve the genetic base available to customers. From what I'm seeing, the more information a producer can gather and provide, the more likely they are to create sought after genetics and a trusted brand."



40-years-old

Booking/Sales Rep, DVAuction

Auctioneer School Graduate

Background: Dikoff grew up on their family's seedstock Angus ranch near Onaka, S.D. His parents, Rodney and Linda, sold registered cattle for 22 years. Dikoff attended auctioneer school and worked full-time with his parents until joining DVAuction in 2009. In June 2017, Dikoff's parents – known as Dikoff Ranch – dispersed their cattle herd. Today, Dikoff, his wife, and their children operate J Dikoff Family Cattle near Faulkton.

Family: Wife Nicole; daughter Kennedy, 13 and sons Lincoln, 11 and Landon, 9

Family Time: With busy careers and active children, the Dikoffs value family time. They can be found following their three children's sports schedules and ringside at cattle and goat shows. But, they also find time away valuable. He says, "We enjoy traveling to new places as a family in the off-sale season, and we camp to relax whenever the schedule allows. It's important to stay connected."

Best Advice: According to Dikoff, "Never give up" remains some of the wisest words he's been given. He says, "If it's your goal, don't give up; keep trying new angles until you get there. When I started at DVAuction, I was not a tech-smart guy, but I am a willing learner and recognized the opportunity given to me."