

Digital DYNAMO

By Codi Vallery-Mills

As a millennial, Brooke German is a native of the internet as the World Wide Web was proposed the same year she was born. And as a digital native, German has leveraged that knowledge to help cattle producers in the state of Iowa – and across the nation – promote beef.

She serves as the director of marketing for the Iowa Beef Industry Council. While her job varies each day, German says her top three areas of focus are advertising, consumer communication and foodservice.

Under her guidance, the Iowa Beef Industry Council has actively pushed out relative content through digital and traditional marketing campaigns. A lot of the promotion is targeted toward German's peer group – millennials. She utilizes the national beef checkoff's, Beef. It's What's For Dinner. recipes and cooking tips, all targeted toward the 45 and younger age group.

"We have a lot of equity, in the Beef. It's What's For Dinner. brand, which was first introduced in the early '90s. The relaunch of the campaign in the fall of 2017 has been successful in resonating with millennials," she says.

She says a key success factor for the beef council, regarding digital advertising, has been getting the correct information to the correct audience when they want it.

German gives the example of a mother that wants easy ground beef recipes. She heads to the internet to search and it's German's job and that of her co-workers to make sure the easy ground beef recipes are there right in front of her when she's looking for it.

"That's the new fast-paced world that we're in. People want the information and they want it now. With our advertising, we place our ads to our target audience and serving the ads with relevant information or searches. This has proven to be very successful in driving traffic to our website for additional information," German says.

She takes her knowledge of beef's benefits and applies them at home as well. Her family routinely eats beef as part of their diet and she shares tips and recipes with friends.

"I'm not just out there sharing this information but I'm implementing it in my own home with my little one. I started introducing him to beef at 6 months of age and when he had

to go through his iron test, I now understand why beef and iron are so important to his health and to his development," German says.

Continuing Trends

With an optimistic outlook, German says the challenges that face the beef industry are also its opportunities. She lists consumers wanting to know the source of their food as a continued trend that will do nothing but grow. She also notes environmental stewardship will gain an even bigger importance in the lives of beef consumers.

Producers are all doing such great things on their farms regarding environmental stewardship and how they are humanely treating their cattle and the improvements that they have made on their farm. It's just taking down that barrier and sharing what they are doing to build that consumer confidence and trust she suggests.

"It is a challenge because with the online and digital world there's a lot of information out there and a lot of times that information is not correct. With the beef industry the negative seems to speak louder than the positive, unfortunately. Our stories and information need to be bigger and louder and how do you make that happen? I think that's definitely an opportunity that we have including bringing people to our farms, utilizing Skype and other technologies to show classrooms and audiences what we're doing on the farm to produce safe and wholesome beef," German says.

And a last trend that still has steam behind it, German says it is the convenience foods and meal kits that offer easy-to-prepare meal ideas and experiences. Consumers are accustomed now to seeing advertisements for Blue Apron and Hello Fresh but grocery stores are also jumping on board with their own meal kits. Hy-Vee for example has two beef meal kits now available.

"And I think that market is just going to continue to grow and expand as families are looking for grab and go, take it home, cook really quick, serve it for the family and get on with your evening plans," German says.



Brooke German

- 28-years-old
- State Center, Iowa
- Director of Marketing for the Iowa Beef Industry Council

Education: Kirkwood Community College and University of Northern Iowa

Background: She grew up on a cattle and row crop operation outside of Alburnett, Iowa. She was active in FFA and after high school pursued a degree in marketing while hoping to find a job that still kept her in the agricultural world.

Family: Husband, Cody, and son, Cole

Mentors: FFA adviser Dan Pickar who played a role in her understanding of agriculture and Lynn Ciha who valued German's opinion and included her in marketing and promotion plans even though she was "just the intern."

Continuing Education: With the speed of change in today's world, German says she has to continue her education in marketing. "The digital world and online world is changing so fast and if I wasn't continuing to learn every day, and if I was still going off what I learned in school, which I graduated in 2013, that information is outdated. So, keeping up with the changing times is vital."

Work Life Balance: It's easy for German to bring her beef industry council work home with her, but she knows she has to focus on family when it's their time. She recently heard that you, "Only get 18 summers with your kids" and it made an impression on her that little moments and focused time matter.

Honored: "It has been a complete honor to work on behalf of Iowa beef producers to help them share their stories and to keep beef top of mind for consumers, not only in Iowa but across the U.S.," German says.