

Black Ink Power Cards

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If you make a living on a ranch, that's a success. Just living on a ranch is a success. Heck, just taking one more breath can be a victory.

Everybody is a winner, at least in some small way. Success does not always manifest itself with visual clues, but you often see the trappings of new equipment, well-cared-for property and cattle that could win a stock show. Perhaps they did win.

Those things mean success in at least a material way, and they imply things are going well.

It's a very broad term, though. Everyone has personal definitions that may change over time, yet you can always succeed in helping each other where there is common ground.

Winning starts with an attitude and priority-defining goals. The highly organized have written mission statements; in any case, you know who you are and what you stand for.

Organizations, interest groups, neighbors and the media provide influence. That's a great help when the communication they foster adds focus and insight, logic and how-to-do-it advice.

Without the exchange of ideas, you can plod along or even race toward apparent failure based on questionable priorities – or an observer's off-target assumptions. Maybe what looks wrong was the result of your careful planning and execution, outside of the box. Let people know what you're up to, your successes and not-yet successes.

Challenges make up a big part of ranching, with weather, markets and disease dealing the cards you must play while other urgent but unrelated challenges vie for your attention. Who has time to do everything right?

Success takes planning. Knowing what you

stand for and where you are going is a key to making quick decisions that remain on target. But it helps to know others have made similar decisions with known results that spell success.

The inspiration can be divine, as in the Christian key-chain slogan that reminds believers to ask WWJD. For more secular challenges, the inspiration can come from "success stories," such as magazine articles about producers like you who have traveled the same path.

In the world of special education, the concept of "Power Cards" builds on a child's ability to identify with a hero who faces and overcomes everyday challenges. When the child encounters those challenges, a teacher or parent shows them a Power Card. Results are encouraging and sometimes amazing.

Ranchers have triumphed over blizzards and drought, solved health problems at weaning and bred better cattle to please feeders, packers and consumers so that their cattle command top bids. You may not have all of those challenges under control yet, but your focused effort can inspire.

Many successful ranchers question their status as role model and balk at being seen as anybody's hero. But producers learn from each other much more readily than from instruction manuals or directions from a technical expert. The neighbors' success points to greater potential on your side of the fence because it's the result of their having applied those how-to concepts.

From print publications to broadcast media and the Internet's World Wide Web, the opportunities to share have grown even as the number of producers has declined. That means the producer "community" should be getting more close-knit, more able and willing to help each other. You may be somebody's Power Card. Δ

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