BRAND BOOK

2015

Farm Journal's TOP PRODUCER EXECUTIVE NETWORK™

FARMING IS CHANGING.

SUMMARY

The agriculture industry continues to consolidate, with the majority of national production coming from the very largest farms.

"In 2012, 75% of all farms had sales of less than $50,000 but together these farms produced only 3% of the total value of agricultural products sold.

In contrast, less than half of 1% of farms had agriculture sales of more than $5 million, but these few farms produced 32% of the total value of all agricultural products sold. Farms with sales of $1 million or more – 4% of all farms – produced 66% of the total value." according to the 2012 USDA Census.

There are, at most, a few thousand farms in the multi-million dollar club, which, for our purposes, includes U.S. and Canadian farms with annual revenue of at least $4 million. These are who we are defining as the Top Producers.

Top Producers

These are large operations. As such, they face many of the very same challenges that rapidly expanding mid-cap businesses face:

- MANAGEMENT
- PAYROLL
- MARKETING
- LONG-TERM STRATEGY
- OPERATIONS
- FINANCE

Indeed, the people who run these operations are every bit as sophisticated, knowledgeable and progressive as their corporate counterparts at large companies in similarly sized businesses.

At the same time, Top Producers face additional issues that are unique to family farms (and most farms, regardless of size, are family owned and operated):

- Managing and working with family members
- Balancing family matters and business matters
- Family succession planning

Isolation

Compounding these challenges is isolation. Farms are run in rural areas, often miles from the next farm or town. Farmers and ranchers (producers) typically have precious few people to confer with about strategic, operational and family issues – usually, just their family members, close staff on the farm and dealers or bankers – who don't always have the farm's best interests at heart.

Those producers that do have close proximity with their neighbor farmers and ranchers are reluctant to collaborate because they see each other as competing for local resources – such as land and employees.

As a result, farmers and ranchers have a very insular view of their operations, and indeed, their lives. They can often feel very lonely.

Driven To Succeed

Today's Top Producers didn't get there by accident. They are every inch the modern executive: strategic, educated, curious, progressive, innovative, ambitious and tireless. They work hard, but they also seek to work smart at all times.

The Need for Peer Collaboration

What they lack is 360-degree vision and outside support – made possible only by having other farmers and ranchers at the same level to bounce ideas with and to share mutual encouragement.

Being able to talk with peers provides a vital outside perspective – ideas a farmer may not have even thought of, as well as obvious but hard truths a farmer had been denying. Leveraging each other's experience, expertise and knowledge, farmers and ranchers can arm themselves to do what is needed to advance their operations to the next level of success.

Peers can also provide much needed accountability. It's harder not to follow through when you've made promises to an expectant group of peers.

Finally, peers share all-important camaraderie; that sense that one is not alone; everyone "has your back." There is an environment of trust and safety. Close bonds are formed. Peers become fast friends.

In concert with like-minded peers, farmers and ranchers can feel emboldened to pursue their visions of continuous improvement and maximum success.

The Executive Peer Group Model in Farming

While executive-level peer advisory groups are more common in the corporate world (exemplified by such successful global peer organizations as Vistage International), they have yet to take a firm hold in farming. There are several reasons for this:

- It's a new concept in the agriculture industry and very few such groups have been established to date.
- Peer advisory groups require a mind-set that is somewhat foreign to older generations of farmers and ranchers – that of being open, vulnerable and forthcoming with personal and proprietary information.
- There is a significant cost involved – in dollars (upwards of $10K per year) and in time. Farmers and ranchers feel like they have precious little spare time as it is. It's difficult to justify taking time away from working and from family to meet with peers.

There is little understanding of the significant ROI potential for participation in a peer group. The inspiration, ideas, accountability and motivation derived could easily far surpass the initial investment in dollars and time.

Farmers and ranchers that have participated in such groups claim to derive substantial benefits and feel it is well worth the investment. Most stay with their groups. There is very little churn.

Clearly then, there is a need, and a significant opportunity. Farmers and ranchers who participate in top producer executive peer groups today number only in the hundreds so far. Top Producer farms in North America number in the thousands.

The stage is set for the uniquely beneficial offering provided by Farm Journal Media's TPEN: Top Producer Executive Network.

TPEN: Unique, Powerful, Credible, Enriching.

TPEN was created by Farm Journal Media, the most trusted and longest running name in agriculture industry news, information, resources and support. Its mission is credible and its benefits are real, proven by the groups that have been established and run since launching in June 2012 .

In a word, TPEN works. Top Producers get the perspective, insight, support and the kick in the pants they need to strategize and act and take their farming operations to the next level of success. They gain validation. Fulfillment. Friendships. Community. Knowledge. Support. Insight. In other words, total enrichment.

VISION

The vision of TPEN is to:

- Provide a uniquely strategic forum for Top Producers.
- Educate Top Producers about the value of collaborative, reciprocal peer advisory groups.
- Provide the apparatus for creating and nurturing these groups.
- Through these groups, help Top Producers achieve the very highest success and fulfillment in their agricultural operations, their families and their own lives.

How we'll do this:

Provide an entree to executive peer groups for Top Producers where:

- Members are carefully matched for goal and personality alignment.
- There is an experienced, professional facilitator supporting the group.
- Confidentiality is ensured.
- There is an environment of mutual support, collaboration, learning, growth, inspiration, motivation and accountability.
- Groups are part of a nationwide network of like-minded, executive level farmers and ranchers.
- Members also have access to a rich set of business resources produced by Farm Journal Media.

WHERE WE STAND

WHO	Demographics	Senior-level farming executives with decision making authority
		Farms with at least $4 million in annual revenue
		Core ages primarily in the 30 – 45 year range (but range from 27 – 60s)
		Primarily college educated
		North America and Canada
		Row crops, specialty crops, livestock and dairy
		70% in the Midwest; the rest distributed throughout the U.S. and Canada
		Typically work with their family on the farm, which is family owned
		Are well known in their communities
		Many (so far) are The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP) graduates
WHO	Psychographics	Humble
		Very strong work ethic
		Conservative and traditional – about family values, farm life, politics, policy
		At the same time, open-minded, willing to try new things, progressive, innovative when it comes to their business – more comfortable with crowd sourcing
		By and large, private about their business results, financial and personal information
		Prioritize time working on the farm and spent with family
		Expansion-minded
		Entrepreneurial
		Concerned about the economics of environmental concerns: non-GMO, organics, climate change, water, energy, etc
		Very involved in their communities – church, causes, possibly lobbying groups. They feel an obligation to give back to their communities.
		Highly value continuing education and acquiring/applying new knowledge and skills
		Highly tech savvy compared to the general farming population
		Take much pride in their role of feeding the world
		Optimistic about the future of farming
		Want to leave a legacy for their children, passing the business on from "generation to generation."
		Farming is their livelihood, not just a job or just a career.
WHO	Their Pain Points	The weather, which is unpredictable
		The markets, which are unpredictable
		Disease and pests
		Increasing input costs
		Human resources
		Family dynamics (having to work with family members)
		Succession planning
		Balancing time for work/family/leisure/giving back
		Isolation – lonely at the top, lonely in the middle of nowhere, lonely with no peers to confer with
		Land limitations
		Dealing with landlords
		Branding – making their brand stand out – and taking into account trends regarding GMO, organics, etc.
		Financing (and having good relationships with their bankers to facilitate this)
		Diversifying portfolios to ride out tough times – what to diversify into? Can be outside of farming altogether.
		Wearing a lot of hats – the CEO is also the tractor driver – very hands on
		Long days – sunup to sundown
		How to best delegate – letting go of things

WHAT	TPEN: Top Producer Executive Network	Executive, peer advisory groups for Top Producers	Strategic Business and family focused Expertly facilitated Members carefully matched. All are non-competitors Meet twice a year on member farms for an in-depth look at that farm's operation Members can interact online within their group and with members of other groups
		Annual meeting (Signature Event) for members of all the groups to come together for networking and educational seminars, with renowned expert guest speakers	
		Access to a storehouse of helpful resources produced by Farm Journal Media	
		$9,900 a year, including two representatives. $2,500 up front, refundable if the member doesn't stay with the group beyond the first meeting	
WHY		Top Producers are isolated and need the support and advice of like-minded farmers and ranchers at their level.	
		A strategic-level peer group provides new, vital perspective from a brain trust of participants working together to help each other.	
		It creates more accountability for participants, who feel the expectation to take the actions agreed to in peer group discussions.	
		Gives Top Producers a community of like-minded people, within their intimate group and in a nationwide network, to share, learn, grow and bond. This rich and beneficial interaction for Top Producers is simply not available anywhere else.	
		Removes the feeling of isolation. Gives Top Producers peer validation, support and encouragement.	
BENEFITS	Farmers and ranchers who have participated have enjoyed these benefits:	Invaluable advice and feedback from other Top Producers who have faced similar issues	
		An effective way to help solve those issues	
		A safe place to talk about personal and business issues they can't talk about with anyone else	
		Feeling that extra push (accountability) to take the actions agreed to in their group.	
		Camaraderie with like-minded people	
		An escape from the every day	
		The end of isolation – connection to other Top Producers from around the continent	
		Access to the vast resources of Farm Journal Media	
WHAT'S DIFFERENT		Nobody else provides groups catering to the specific, strategic needs of Top Producers.	
		No cookie-cutter approach. TPEN meets the diverse needs of individual group members with group structure, organization and facilitation tailored to those needs.	
		Small, intimate groups assembled with extreme care	
		Absolute confidentiality	
		No outside interest (such as a group sponsored by a corporate supplier like Monsanto or Pioneer)	
		TPEN is designed and maintained by the most trusted name in farming news, information, resources and support: Farm Journal Media.	

BRAND ATTRIBUTES

Value Proposition

Brand Promise

- A peer group designed just for leaders like you, the Top Producer
- A brain trust of Top Producers like you who help each other solve issues and achieve greater success with their farms
- A place to gain new ideas, benchmarks, knowledge, insight and counsel from outside experts, and to share your expertise and perspective in return
- A safe place to open up about business and personal issues you could not comfortably discuss with anyone else
- A catalyst for your personal and professional growth
- Solid friendships that last a lifetime
- Inspiration, motivation, and enrichment
- An experience that is invaluable to you, with immeasurable return on your investment
- From the agricultural information company you have come to know, love and trust: Farm Journal Media

Brand Core Values

The brand audit identified 30 brand value words, which can be consolidated into 7:

- PROGRESSIVENESS
- TRUST
- LEADERSHIP
- ENRICHMENT
- FAMILY
- HELPFULNESS
- FARMING AS A NOBLE PROFESSION

It is also suggested that TPEN adopts, as its corporate core values, the following, which closely match the 7 words above:

- Delivering the positive power of peer groups
- Helping Top Producers reach their full potential
- Helping Top Producers and their families live happier lives
- Providing a safe forum for Top Producers
- Open-mindedness
- Meeting the needs of every individual group member
- Respecting tradition while continually innovating
- Focused on strategy
- Focused on leaders

Brand Personality

- LOYAL
- HARD WORKING
- SERIOUS
- CURIOUS
- RESPECTFUL
- HUMBLE
- GOOD LISTENER
- QUIET CONFIDENCE
- TRUSTING
- HONEST
- HELPFUL
- AFFABLE
- CARING
- EMPATHETIC
- SUPPORTIVE
- WELCOMING
- DOWN-TO-EARTH

Brand Attributes

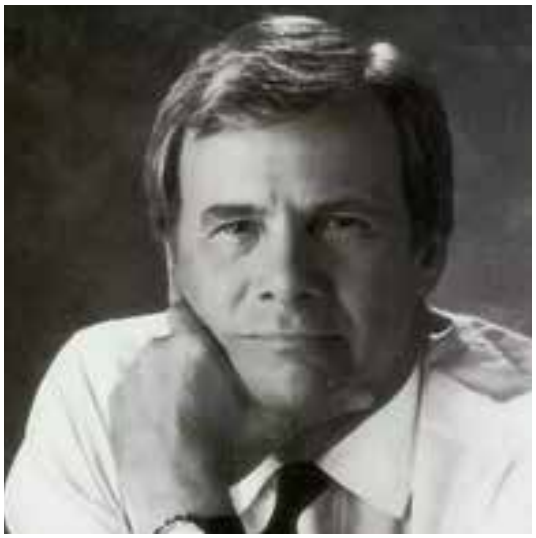
- HARD WORKING
- LEADING EDGE
- INNOVATIVE
- DYNAMIC
- SAFE
- PROFESSIONAL
- WELL ORGANIZED
- DEPENDABLE
- COMPETENT
- EXECUTIVE LEVEL
- CREDIBLE
- EXPERIENCED
- RESOURCEFUL
- WELL-NETWORKED
- INSIGHTFUL
- ACCESSIBLE
- TRADITIONAL
- RESPECTED/RESPECTABLE
- WISE
- EXPANSION-MINDED
- ENTREPRENEURIAL

Brand Voice

- The TPEN brand speaks with a voice that is articulate, professional and quietly confident, but never pedantic or arrogant.
- Like Top Producers, TPEN is a leader, but is humble about it. This comes through in a voice that is more down-to-earth and familiar, without needing to use fancy words to sound intelligent, but without dumbing down anything either.
- TPEN's voice is warm, caring and human, reflecting the family values of the Top Producers it serves.

IN A WORD, ITS VOICE IS FAMILIAR. WITH TPEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE TALKING WITH A TRUSTED, RESPECTED FRIEND WHO IS YOUR PEER.

Brand Character



PERSONIFIED

The TPEN brand character can be compared to that of Tom Brokaw, respected NBC news correspondent and anchor, and author of "The Greatest Generation." Mr. Brokaw is known as:

- HONEST
- CREDIBLE
- WHOLESOME
- COMPETENT
- MIDWESTERN
- RESPECTED, AND RESPECTFUL
- SEASONED/VETERAN
- DEDICATED
- EXPERT
- KNOWLEDGEABLE
- TRADITIONAL
- ON THE FOREFRONT

AS A CAR

Buick has been reinvented in the past few years. To steal a phrase from its departed sister division, "This ain't your father's Buick." Today's Buick is sharp looking, capable, progressive, world class and strong, while retaining a character that is all American. It's a classic American brand with a progressive 21st century verve. This is the essence of TPEN and the Top Producers it serves. This ties in with the reinvention that Top Producers have successfully undertaken with their farms: "Not your father's farm operation." They have been expansion-minded – a key characteristic of this group.

What we want people to think:

We will know that we have branded successfully when members of our target market think of the following words, or close synonyms, when they think of TPEN.

03 WORDS ENTERPRISING. IMPACTFUL. LEADERS.

01 WORD LEADERS.

"Leaders" is the word that best sums up what we want TPEN to be known for in the minds of Top Producers. TPEN is for them: the leaders of the agricultural industry, running the largest farms in North America.

We also want TPEN to viewed as leaders in providing executive peer groups that cater to Top Producers.

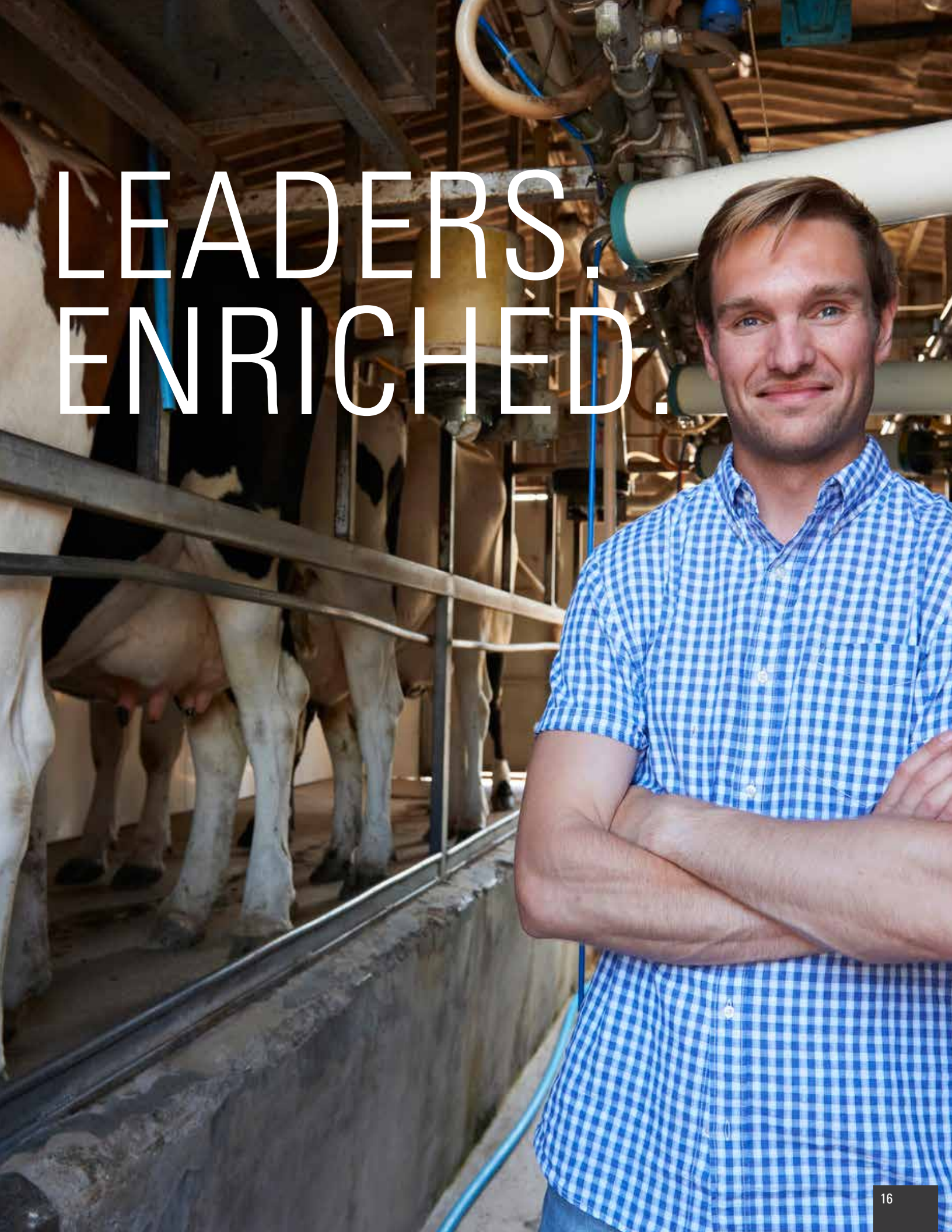
What we want people to feel:

We will know that we have branded successfully when members of our target market have these feelings (whether they describe them in these exact words or with close synonyms) when they encounter the TPEN brand.

03 WORDS CONNECTED. ENERGIZED. ENRICHED.

01 WORD ENRICHED.

"Enriched" encompasses all the ways a person can improve and grow – with knowledge, wisdom, experience, support, community, feedback, motivation, financial success and emotional success. It quite literally means "to make richer." We want people to feel enriched whenever they have experiences with TPEN.


LEADERS.
ENRICHED.

KEY MESSAGE STATEMENTS

TPEN is an executive, peer advisory group organization whose mission is to help Top Producers – leaders of the largest farms and ranches in North America – achieve the greatest possible success with their farms, their families and their whole life.

Each TPEN group is a brain trust of carefully matched Top Producers, moderated by an expert facilitator, who help each other solve business and personal issues.

TPEN group members collaborate on a regular basis to share new ideas, expertise, perspective, feedback and encouragement.

TPEN is a safe place to open up about business and personal issues for leaders who have precious few other people they can talk to, much less get an unbiased point of view.

TPEN also provides members of all groups with a suite of online resources and an annual national conference where all members can network together and learn from expert guest speakers.

TPEN members consistently report a substantial return on their investment in membership, gaining ideas and support from their groups that have helped them significantly improve their revenues, profits, productivity, and work/family balance.

TPEN is produced and managed by the most trusted voice in agriculture: Farm Journal Media.

OUR BRAND STORY.

You're part of long, grand tradition of farming. Your family manages and works on the farm. Perhaps your parents also ran this farm. And their parents. You help supply food to the world. Yours is noble work.

You're also part of an elite group of farmers and ranchers. You're a Top Producer. You produce millions of dollars worth of agricultural products every year. Your operation is in the top 1% of farms, which collectively produce nearly half of all agricultural output in North America.

Like every farmer, you work long days and wear many hats. Sometimes you are the tractor driver, the sprayer operator, the milker...you name it. All this, on top of being the one who manages the farm and plans its growth.

But unlike most farmers and ranchers, you are truly the CEO of a multi-million dollar operation. This comes with all the strategic complexities of running a large business, compounded by all the unpredictable and uncontrollable variables of farming – the weather, pests and disease, input costs, and the markets. Not to mention, the dynamics of working with the same people you call your parents, spouse, siblings, children and extended family too. The family dynamic can make for a tricky work environment, and you know this all too well.

You've got a lot on your plate – and nobody to talk to about it.

Most producers in your area simply do not deal with the scope of issues that you face daily, so they can't relate to what you're going through.

Or, if there are other like operations in the area, they are likely competitors – not the folks you want to share your issues with.

And often, family issues that affect the operation are the last thing you want to discuss directly with your family. At least, not until you've had a chance to think things through and get some perspective. But with nobody else to talk to, how can you gain that perspective?

It can often feel pretty lonely. In fact, the old adage, "It's lonely at the top," has never felt more true to you.

That's where TPEN comes in.

Welcome to the Top Producer Executive Network. Your network.

At Farm Journal Media, we have been serving and supporting farmers and ranchers like you with news, education and advice since 1877. You probably read Farm Journal, Top Producer, and maybe some of the other Farm Journal Media publications too. Perhaps you also visit AgWeb for daily industry updates. We might even have met you at a recent Top Producer Seminar. You have come to rely on us as your trusted source of information and insight to help you with your operation.

A few years ago however, we could not help noticing that something was missing for Top Producers like you. We understood the isolation that comes with running an operation like yours. We saw that there was not an easy way for you to get the counsel, support and camaraderie you were missing to help solve the strategic issues that were getting in the way of your operation's success.

That's when we conceived of TPEN:

Farm Journal's TOP PRODUCER EXECUTIVE NETWORK™

TPEN brings together small groups of like-minded heads of non-competing Top Producer farms and ranches, people at your level, to share new ideas, fresh perspectives, expertise and encouragement several times a year. Each group is moderated by an expert facilitator who is also an agriculture industry professional. Members of groups are carefully matched to ensure alignment of interests, needs and goals.

It's like having your own personal brain trust of people who really get the strategic issues you're facing, because they're facing them too. At the same time, every operation has its own set of circumstances, so you can benefit from the unique perspectives that come from that.

TPEN helps you end the isolation you have been feeling, with a group of peers that will take an active interest in helping you succeed, just as you will with them. TPEN gives you the tools and support you need to achieve the greatest possible success with your business and with your family life.

Most importantly, with TPEN, you finally have a safe place where you can actually talk with people about what you're going through. Openly. Comfortably. And with honest, caring feedback from peers you will quickly call some of your best friends.

As a TPEN member, you also have online access to a trove of helpful resources researched and published by Farm Journal Media just for Top Producers – and ongoing access to your fellow TPEN members through your own online portal. TPEN gives you year-round strategic support to help you be the master of your success, and year-round connection to your peers so you never feel alone again.

When we first announced that we were launching TPEN, at the Top Producer Seminar in 2012, 78 of your fellow Top Producers immediately expressed interest. We knew we'd struck a chord.

In just three years, TPEN has grown into twelve groups across the continent, with some 150 regular members improving the success of their operations with the help of their peers. We recently celebrated with our second annual TPEN Signature Event, bringing together all of our TPEN members for three days of networking with each other and learning from expert guest speakers.

TPEN is working. Over 90% of our members renew year after year. They consistently report a substantial return on their investment in membership, gaining ideas and support from their groups that have helped them significantly improve their revenues, profits, productivity, and work/family balance. And as we work closely with them, we continue to improve how we organize and support TPEN groups to provide members with the maximum possible benefit.

TPEN is only getting started. The folks at Farm Journal Media have devoted themselves to growing this much needed resource for you. As with everything we do, Farm Journal Media is dedicated to helping you achieve the highest possible success – with your operation, with your family, and with your whole life.

Farm Journal's TOP PRODUCER EXECUTIVE NETWORK™