

## Direct-To-Consumer Pays Off For Cattleman

"Personal relationships with customers really make this business click," says beef producer Tom Smith of Ashley, Ill., who says direct-selling beef is an unbeatable business plan for a family farmer cattleman. He butchers and then delivers finished beef direct to consumers.

Smith sells sides and quarters to about 60 families in the area. He refers to his operation of selling directly to consumers as "relationship selling".

"It's a win-win operation. I can market at a 30 percent premium, and at the same time give the customer a 30 to 40 percent savings in the cost of their beef," says Smith.

As a producer, Smith makes the most of natural resources available to him on his 288-acre family farm where he grazes his 25-cow herd of Angus-Simmental cattle.

He also row crops 150 acres.

While he is a fifth generation farmer, Smith hasn't always farmed the land. He has a degree in ag journalism and he also spent a few years as a preacher. His mother persuaded him to return and farm the family home place. On the farm, Smith has put to good use what he learned about relating to people.

He follows a split rotational grazing system using 11 paddocks. He has developed a system of watering his animals, making sure they're never more than 600 to 800 ft. from water. Part of his system includes a 3-acre pond.

As a direct marketer, Tom produces and processes the beef according to his customers' preferences. But he offers free home delivery of the finished product.

"When I deliver I make time to talk to my customers. Delivery has really been a plus



Tom Smith delivers chests of frozen beef directly to consumers.

for my business," says Smith. He talks not only quality to them, but also points out that buying from him results in a substantial savings to them.

Home delivery not only endears him to his customers, but it offers him an opportunity to get feedback about his product and ser-

vice. A large part of his marketing plan consists of sending out letters each year reminding customers when fresh beef is ready for them.

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## She Turned Her Artistic Talent Into A Business

Being a good artist requires talent. Being successful and making money at it requires marketing. Bonnie Young of Newark, Ohio, has been making a living as a rural artist for 11 years. She sometimes spends three weeks marketing for each week of painting, she says. But it pays off. Her client list includes Crate and Barrel, The Longaberger Co., Bath and Body Works, and Starbuck's Coffee.

And it includes the neighbor down the road who wants a simple "Fresh Eggs" sign.

"I love doing it all," says Young, "from big murals to small items. I love the interaction with people, too."

Though she has a bachelor's degree in fine arts and has done fine art paintings, Young says she's developed a casual style of her own. "People say that it's whimsical and yet it reflects life and realism. Living in the country on a hobby farm also influences her work, though Young has lived in all areas of the country because she moved often while growing up.

She had an interest in art as a child, and college education helped as far as marketing, she says. She offers tips to other artists:

- Check out submission guidelines on web sites of businesses. Some want 12 designs. Some want 400.
- Protect your rights by including your printed name, signature and date on each art piece, and keep copies. Don't send them by email, send a package for initial contacts and include return postage.
- Follow up with a call a week later to make sure the package arrived. Call again within three weeks if they haven't responded.
- Be creative in how you send things, so your art stands out. Young once made a box look like a record player and made all her art look like records. She notes that when art is accepted, some companies pay a flat

fee, while others pay royalties.

"Don't put all your eggs in one basket," Young says. "Be involved in lots of different things. She painted a 25 by 35-ft. mural on a barn and paints on barn wood and other media, though watercolor is her favorite medium.

Young says her best advice is to be prolific and keep trying. She adds her father always encouraged her and told her that "overnight success" is usually 15 years in the making.

It's also important to paint for yourself, Young says. Her own habit of painting snowmen to relieve stress resulted in selling designs for pottery and plates for Crate and Barrel. Through a sales clerk, Young learned that one customer said she had a very difficult year and the only things that made her smile were the snowmen plates, which she displayed year round.

"My goal is to create art that makes people pause, smile and laugh with life," Young says.

Besides selling designs to companies, she does a lot of commission work including painting portraits for people throughout the U.S., based from photos mailed to her. She recently started a new line of greeting cards and kid's dishes under her own name.

Young has a website, showing art she has for sale as well as how to commission items. It's also a place to direct potential clients to view her work.

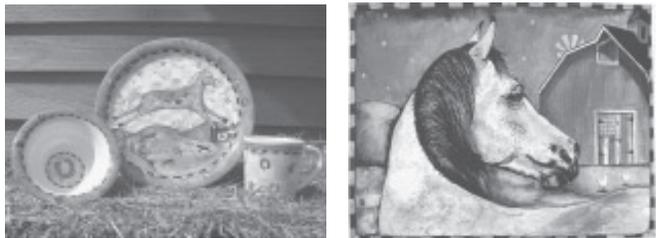
She enjoys teaching art to children in her daughter's 4-H club and meeting with other area artists. "You need to find a community and talk to others about it," Young says.

She stresses that artists can't give up. "It doesn't come easy all the time, even when you're established," she says. "But, I can't imagine doing anything else. It's a lifestyle."

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Bonnie Young has been making a living as a rural artist for 11 years.



Young sells designs for pottery and plates. A website shows the art she has for sale.



## Turning Old Wheels Into Dollars

By C.F. Marley, Contributing Editor

I recently came across a man with a unique farm-based business. Stacey Sidwell, Sorento, Ill., turns old spoked wheels into hanging wall decorations.

I sold Stacey four steel wheels for \$30 apiece. A couple of the wheels were on an old manure spreader, which he took off my hands for the scrap value.

Stacey works nights at the Winchester firearms plant in Alton, Ill., and spends his day-

light hours on his farm-based business sidelines.

He decorates the wood or steel wheels with flowers, barn siding, bird houses, and whatever else he can think of. They sell well at local shows and field days.

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