

## Introduction

The Cal Poly Bull Test is a student-run performance bull test and sale looking to improve its marketing and create a marketing plan for future students to use. There needs to be complete analysis of its current marketing efforts as well as a comparison to the marketing efforts of similar bull sales in the state.

An important piece in marketing bull sales to the public is sharing information about the bulls that will be up for sale (Chvosta, 2001). Furthermore, when constructing a marketing plan, the most important factors to consider include “the firm's short- term and long-term goals, the characteristics of its market, the needs of its clients, and the strengths and weaknesses of the competition,” (Hamburg, 1992).

The Cal Poly Bull Test started in 1956. Every April, ranchers bring their bulls to Cal Poly to participate in student run bull test. There is not currently a process in place to introduce the consignors and their bulls to the public. The Cal Poly Bull Test does not currently have a strong marketing plan in place but “In the competitive age now it's not only the food production that needs marketing but also the inputs in the agriculture,” (Pokharna, 2016). The Cal Poly Bull Test is entirely student-run and teams of students are assigned to each area of a beef operation including nutrition and marketing.

The author will develop a comprehensive marketing plan to help the marketing team understand the materials and assets they need to obtain from other team members as well as help them market the Cal Poly Bull Test successfully to the public and consignors.

## Background

According to the Cal Poly Bull Test website, *“the Cal Poly Bull Test started in 1956 and was one of the earliest performance bull tests in the country. It was designed to be a proven source of range ready bulls available for sale to commercial cattle producers, provide valuable experience for students in management, and as a service to the Beef Cattle industry. The first year, the test was conducted at Peterson Ranch. The bulls were grained on grass pasture and then weighed at the end of the test, providing unbiased results. From 1956 to 1978, the Bull Test was conducted at the Beef Cattle Evaluation Center and in 1979 the Bull Test moved to Poly Canyon on the outskirts of campus. Today the Test is conducted at the Beef Center, which was designed specifically for the Bull Test. Originally, only 60 two-year-old Hereford bulls were admitted to the Test. By the late 1960s, Angus bulls began joining the Test and in 1978 the program was switched from two-year-old to yearling bulls.*

### About the Bull Test:

*In April, cattlemen from throughout the state and country bring their registered bull calves to compete in the Cal Poly Bull Test. The students in the enterprise are responsible for raising the bulls and managing their health program. Managers monitor animal performance by conducting weigh days, which allows us to measure Average Daily Gain (ADG) of each animal. In addition, advances in technology are utilized to assess animal performance. Ultrasound measurements, reproductive tests, and EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences) are now used to identify the highest quality bulls. In the fall, overall animal performance is measured and bulls that exceed the test index qualify for the sale. The Bull Sale is held at the Cal Poly Beef Unit and cattlemen from throughout the country come to the facility to buy high-performing yearling bulls.*

Today, Beef Cattle Specialist Zachary McFarlane, PhD, and Beef Operations Manager Aaron Lazanoff, oversee the historical bull test. The Bull Test weekend also provides educational sessions, workshops and guest speakers to address issues of interest for the cattle producers.

## Methodology

The author's expertise in marketing comes from extensive industry experience working with Central Coast company, Big Red Marketing. Before embarking on analyzing and then building marketing material, the content creator needs to research techniques, research the client's needs, and then work on a plan of action and a timeline to carry out the tasks.

The author began by locating and analyzing the Bull Test marketing efforts and plan in place. Next, set up a meeting with the Cal Poly Beef Specialist leading the Bull Test project. Additional meetings can be set up with students designated as the marketing team. With a plan of initial action in place, first, contact each of the consignors at the bull sale and write questions to ask each one. Craft the interview questions based on the main goals of the Cal Poly Bull Test and reflecting the pride the consignor's take in the genetics of their bulls.

Then, start designing a layout using Adobe InDesign for the Bull Test's newsletter. This template can be used for every new newsletter, so future students only need to update current information. Create both a PDF will filler text and InDesign template that matches Cal Poly's branding standards located within University Marketing.

Then begin designing a social media guide for posts on social media. Develop reference posts and a schedule of dates prior to the show when it is appropriate to begin marketing efforts. The social media plan also provides a tentative schedule of posting and hashtags to utilize on certain days of the week. The dates are not set in stone but offer a weekly layout that may be followed with new content each week.

Schedule another meeting with the Bull Test project advisor and marketing team to make sure all of the information that going into the marketing plan is on par with the overarching goal of the Cal Poly Bull Test.

Make any needed adjustments. Then deliver the updated versions of the Cal Poly Bull Test via a cloud sharing system so the students and advisor have access to all files created.

## Results

The final marketing plan is broken into four sections: the summary, the target audience, the distribution schedule for various mediums, the hard copy marketing materials and collateral. The sections serve to easily organize the marketing information into easily understandable sections for the Bull Test marketing team.

All information included in the marketing plan was derived from existing information provided by Dr. McFarlane as well as informational papers on how to build marketing plans and what to include. The final copy was presented to Dr. McFarlane electronically via email.

## Discussion

This guide will be used by future students who are enrolled in the Cal Poly Bull Test enterprise and wish to contribute to the marketing efforts. It is possible that edits to certain sections and materials may be necessary to represent current needs of the Bull Test Team. Each Bull Test Team may have to tailor the report to fit their needs or to incorporate new ideas as they arise. If this project were to be recreated, more time would need to be spent with current and past participants in the Bull Test to gauge the types of information and content they would like to see in the marketing Plan.

By following a marketing plan, the Bull Test marketing team will offer a starting point and a guide to success. It is not set in stone and can be tailored to fit the needs of an ever-evolving event.

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