

Estate Planning and Family Communication

3:30 p.m. session, Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2005

Presenter: Randy McKee, Estate Planning Services Inc., Rapid City, S.D.

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA (Dec. 7, 2005) — Without good communication and a well-thought-out plan, transferring a family farm to the next generation often yields disagreements, hurt feelings and legal action. Randy McKee, a certified estate planner and financial adviser, spoke to Range Beef Cow Symposium attendees about the importance of family communication in agricultural operations and gave tips for staying focused on the most important farm asset — family relationships.

“Having seen some good, smooth transitions and some bad ones, I can tell you that the most important thing that gets squandered is the relationships,” McKee said. “When there’s money involved, people get really stupid.”

McKee told attendees valuable outcomes can only be achieved with a plan — one created after directly addressing the critical issues and actually making decisions. He said the best plans are flexible and allow for change over time, since situations can change.

He recommended the first thing people do is “get a good, durable power of attorney — one for health care and one for asset management. Then look at setting up a trust.”

McKee cautioned families against establishing a limited liability partnership (LLP), or any other business entity, before the entire family is ready, willing and able to commit to the legal implications. However, when families are ready, those business entities can have advantages.

When starting the estate planning process, McKee said, “You first have to understand the difference between quarrelling and arguing. Then you have to understand what respectful listening is.

“Arguing is presenting ideas supported by evidence and reason. Quarrelling is presenting opinions on an emotional basis,” he continued. “What we want to do is have lots of arguments throughout this process, but keep quarrelling to a minimum.”

McKee emphasized that everybody’s opinion counts, especially to them. “It counts way



Estate planner Randy McKee explained the difference between arguing and quarrelling, and the concept of respectful listening.
[PHOTO BY LYNN GORDON]

more to them than your opinion counts to them,” he said. “The thing you have to remember is that in today’s environment it cost only 35¢ to call a lawyer, ... and the most likely person to call is the one whose opinion is not listened to.”

McKee recommended using the Family Vision Matrix® to “get all the cards on the table” when planning estate transfers. To receive the Family Vision Matrix or ask McKee estate planning questions, visit his Web site at www.estateplanning.20m.com or call (605) 721-7519, Ext. 201.

— by Meghan Soderstrom, assistant editor, Angus Productions Inc.
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