



FATHER/SON DUO BRINGS THE REALITIES OF HOG FARMING TO THE MAINSTREAM

A few years ago, a young man in southeast Iowa graduated high school and had a decision to make. What next? As the son of a 5th generation hog farmer, Sawyer Whisler knew what it took to raise hogs and work the family's 400 acres of row crops. Now he had to choose between going to college and starting a career off the farm, like his brother, or continuing with the family business.

While farm life called to Sawyer and he decided to build his first hog barn, he wanted to do something more. Something different. "I knew that if I was going to build my career on the farm, I wanted to do something big to really make it viable for a seventh generation," said Sawyer.

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As a member of the social media generation, Sawyer saw an opportunity in using social as a business in hog farming. "No one else was doing it in hogs, and I saw the opportunity to positively promote modern day hog production while monetizing the farm in a different way."

At first, his father, Tork Whisler, wasn't interested. "I wasn't sure it would take," commented Tork, "but once I saw his vision materialize, I was like a moth to the flame. The animal

rights groups have been painting our industry with an 8-inch brush, saying it's one thing when it's not. We wanted to tell the story rather than having someone tell it for us."

Transparency in Hog Production

Sawyer wanted to show who they were as farmers, as the people who provide food to the country. At first, he was worried that he wasn't qualified enough to be that voice. However, armed with a GoPro and a Sony A73, he quickly gained confidence, especially as the feedback rolled in.

"Most feedback is very positive. Because of transparency, they relate to us. People have really liked learning about the what, how and why's of who is producing their food." There have been some negative comments on their various social platforms – which are currently YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok – but even those have presented an opportunity. "We take any comment that could be interpreted as negative and make a

video on that subject to educate our audience," said Sawyer. "Some groups will try to say the animals are dirty and mistreated, but we show how social the pigs are and how well they are cared for. We tell the real story of pig farming."

"People are curious," said Tork. "They want to know why we do things we do, and once we showed them, we received a lot of support." What surprised Tork and Sawyer a little is that their audience base is often the first to speak up and defend them when a negative comment is made. This atmosphere of community helped the This'll Do Farm brand really take shape.

From an Idea to a Following

In just three years, the pair has built a following of nearly 30,000 subscribers on YouTube. Getting there had its fair share of bumps.

"There was a lot to learn," said Sawyer. Filming, editing and promotion was all new to the duo. "At first, I tried to use my Sony inside the barns, but pigs are curious animals and anytime I put it down, they'd knock it over. I transitioned to the GoPro and learned a lot about angles and sound."

Tork commented that, "I think the greatest opportunity out there today is YouTube. If you put your mind to it, you can learn anything." That's how Sawyer learned how to use Adobe Premier Pro to edit videos. And just last year, when the BarnTalk podcast was launched on Spotify and iTunes, the pair found success by learning from others first. "When we started the podcast we watched others, learned from it. It was all trial and error."

The podcast, which is recorded in the hayloft of the barn built by Sawyer's

grandfather, provides an outlet to discuss the business of farming with points of view from people in all different types of agriculture. "Farmers were late to the social game, but we're changing that tide now," said Tork. "And now I understand that if we tell the story correctly, the animal ag business has a bright future."

A Smart Path to Managing Growth

As the This'll Do Farm brand has scaled up, the biggest challenge has been finding time to do it all. "At the end of the day, there's still hogs to feed, barns to clean and crops to plant. We're only two people, so delegating work and hiring is a priority," said Tork. When Sawyer decided to launch an online store to offer merchandise to their following, he chose a turnkey vendor to manage the orders for him. "We're trying to build a system where we can continue our farm work and build a team that allows us to do it all. That's one part of it."

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"If you had asked me if this would be my life three or four years ago, I'd have laughed," said Tork. "But now, when I think about what the future will be, farming with Sawyer, I'm excited about the possibilities."



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