

## What Have You Learned During COVID?

Every situation, regardless of how unfortunate or life changing, has the ability to help us understand life in a new way and make more informed decisions going forward. COVID and the resulting changes to how we do business and our everyday lives has, in many ways, been unfortunate and had negative impacts. However, there are many lessons and important things we can glean from it and move forward. This past year has truly been a catalyst for change particularly advancing the prominence of the online-only auction method. I will admit I was skeptical in regards to how buyers would respond, particularly on farm auctions which I am most familiar with. With many of our customers having only bid in-person, would we lose their business? Would people bid on the plethora of tools and parts and small items with as much excitement as they had at live sales without the verbal sales pitch of the auctioneer and ring men? I can now say from experience that people adapt and by using our skills and tools as auctioneers to sell items in an online-only format we have created an environment that delivers comparable - if not better - results.

In some respects, I feel as if the world has changed around us and COVID is/was the vehicle that helped us catch up. Before we go any further, I must say I enjoy a live auction on a beautiful day as much as any person could and I deeply miss those days, interacting with the people and being part of the live auction method of marketing. However, after several conversations with my peers who frequently buy at auction, I find I am in the minority and many people my age prefer to bid from their phone or computer instead of standing and listening to the chant of an auctioneer. Even my father made a comment about how spending a day at an auction or watching a simulcast on the computer is not typically a good use of his time, and how a timed online auction allows him to only spend time picking up the item or items he truly wanted to buy.

Thankfully, even as I feel we will be steadily marching towards a more online future, sellers still look to us as auctioneers to market their property. The skills developed and honed doing live auctions have been applied to online auctions almost overnight, a transition our industry and Association should be proud of. Live auctions do offer one distinct advantage we have all been missing during COVID though: the human connection. This is particularly true in agriculture; a farm retirement auction serves dual purpose as a retirement party for the farmer and his family, something missed with an online auction. Going forward more online auctions are inevitable but when our sellers request it, and the buyers support it, live auctions are still one of the best ways to bring people together and help them move to the next chapter in their lives, something I'm proud and excited to be a part of.