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Ryan Slabaugh Of Think Regeneration Successfully Develops A Public-Facing Resource For Showcasing Farmer Impact

Helping farmers transition to regenerative agriculture and building regional food systems are among the top priorities of rapidly growing nonprofit Think Regeneration. To support its continued impact in literal fields and communities across the U.S., Think Regeneration needed an annual report to tell its story and clarify its key differentiators for current partners and prospective funders.

That's when founder Ryan Slabaugh reached out to Nate Birt at Silver Maple Strategies.

"The real thread of all our programs needed an outside voice to clarify, 'Here's what you guys are really doing.' It may sound trite and overly simplistic, but that's the essence," Slabaugh recalls.

Clarifying A Regenerative Vision

Ryan and his team had already done an immense amount of work producing thought leadership on regenerative agriculture topics, co-creating and co-leading programs on the ground with farmers and technical service providers, and building novel support services for the agriculture industry.

The process of collaborating on an annual report enabled Silver Maple Strategies to help Ryan and his team get clarity on key messages, connect the dots among core differentiators, and put it all on paper in a way that could tell the most compelling story about current impact and future potential to do good.

"The most important thing was the annual report copy Nate gave us. Through that process, we should be able to use that to build our organization. That was really the best-case scenario," Ryan says.

The timing of the three-month engagement worked well and enabled Think Regeneration to prepare for a new season of fundraising, growth, and impact.

"Nate joined us right when we were just getting started. We didn't really even know what we were. That's what we were trying to figure out—what kind of organization are we trying to be, what impact are we going to have?" Ryan recalls. "The other day, I got one of the best compliments you can get as a

Case Study

Ryan Slabaugh, Think Regeneration



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startup. Someone said, 'Oh my gosh, you're only a year old! I had no idea.' It felt good that we've been able to establish a presence right off the bat."

Smooth And Straightforward Collaboration

Ryan describes the process of working with Nate and Silver Maple Strategies as "just about frictionless. Nate is a really good facilitator and good at managing the process and conversation. He's very conscious of time. He's very direct in what he needs and wants to do the job, and I appreciate all of that. He's also a nice guy, and I think that's worth mentioning. That's one of the criteria for who we work with."

Through the annual report creation, Ryan says, he and his team gained a key benefit: confidence.

"I think that's something really hard to get early on as an organization," Ryan notes. "Even if we increased that confidence level 5%, that's kind of exponential for where we are. We certainly are seeing that picture a lot more clearly now."

Under other circumstances, Ryan would have found a way to buckle down and get the work done himself. Yet collaborating with Silver Maple Strategies provided needed outside perspective.

"I would have just done it in my garage with some duct tape and some good old-fashioned parts laying around the house," he jokes. "Could I have done the annual report report? Yeah. Are we better off that I didn't? Yeah."

Open To Social Impact Communication Growth

For leaders considering whether to engage Nate and Silver Maple Strategies on content strategy projects such as an annual report, Ryan recommends staying open minded. Recognize your thinking and your vision may change as the engagement proceeds.

"Be OK with ending up in a different spot than you thought," Ryan says. "One of the things I really wanted to avoid early on in this organization is the entrepreneur's disease—feeling like I have to be in a room by myself doing everything and then come out and ask, 'What do you think?' I work with a lot of amazing folks. I have a specific skill set. It's very hard to come in at the very end of a project and have buy-in. When we brought Nate in, the idea was not to be so far down the process of defining our vision, our reporting, and what our programs are that we wouldn't be open to redefining those."