

MERCHANDISING



Should be true- and a lot more

"If you add to the truth you subtract from it," the Talmud says.

Advertisers need to keep this in mind, particularly when writing headlines. Too often registered livestock advertisers write headlines that are only trite phrases or overworked ideas that have long ago lost their meaning, and that tend to stretch the truth. You know the kind--"He Does It All" or "We Offer Only The Very Best", or "He Is Truly Wonderful." The usual reader reaction to these claims is, "Oh Sure," and then they turn the page.

Even when such a headline catches the attention of a reader and ends up helping make a sale, the buyer eventually discovers that the product doesn't equal the picture the ad painted. More than likely that

sale is the first and last for that particular customer.

Effective headlines should get the reader's attention all right. But they should also offer the reader a real benefit, as well as sum up the sales message with as much interest and drama as possible.

A while back one Angus headline read, "No Sex Discrimination Here!. This Cow Passes Her Excellence to Son or Daughter Alike". The headline might have been better if a fact had been substituted for "Excellence" such as "Milk", "Growth", or "Weaning Weight". But still it is a dramatic claim with an obvious benefit.

Another Angus ad I liked had a headline that read, "It's not how big they get, it's how they get big". The point was that

the advertiser's cattle performed under range conditions without the use of hot feed. The illustration and copy expanded upon this claim. It got your attention and made you want to read and learn more.

The headline is sometimes the most important single element in an advertisement. More often the illustration is the most important element with the headline a close second. In any event, the headline and illustration must work together to attract the reader to read the rest of the advertisement.

With so much riding on the headline, it deserves a great deal more attention than many advertisers give it. A flamboyant claim seldom, if ever, works even if it is true. And a headline that claims more than the product can deliver is a trap that will do little but damage the reputation of the advertiser.

When you create an advertisement, always keep in mind that you are talking to your present and future customers. It helps you pick out one of your best customers, and a person who you would like to be one of your best customers, and pretend that you are designing the ad just for these two people to read.

And never forget that every buyer will eventually hold you to any claims you make.

"If you add to the truth, you subtract from it."

AJ



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and Public Relations**