

## Advertise Your Cattle's Benefits to Customers

"The hardest thing in ag advertising is doing good advertising, because bad advertising is so much easier to do."

That's the observation of Dick Meyocks, who retired recently as chairman and CEO of an advertising agency he helped found in West Des Moines, Iowa. In an interview that appeared in *Agri-Marketing* magazine he offered two ideas that can help people do good advertising.

Too many businesses advertise "... what they want to sell and not enough of what the customer wants to buy. There is too much 'our welds are better' and too little of what that means to the buyer," Meyocks said.

How true. So much of poor advertising highlights features rather than benefits. We see this all the time in advertising for registered Angus cattle. Thumbing through an old issue of the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, I see ads that promote superior bull genetics, but little about what these genetics mean to the buyer. It's one thing to feature superior carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs) in an ad, and quite another to feature the benefits a person should receive from using the high EPD bulls.

It's not that difficult. Instead of promoting positive carcass EPDs explain how much more money a bull with positive EPDs can earn if 50 percent or 90 percent of the steers he sires will grade USDA Choice rather than having 25 percent or 40 percent make the grade. These figures bring home the value of investing in superior genetics. They are dramatic, and will peak the interest of potential buyers.

Other advertisers in the *Bulletin* issue are proud their cattle are raised in rugged conditions on forage rather than grain. But they don't say why this is a good thing. That's a mistake because some customers could see this feature as a negative. So if it's a good feature, and I know it can be, then it provides benefits to the buyer.

For example, bulls raised this way are probably tough, not too fat, and ready to go to work without a letdown period. They have good feet and legs and can travel long distances if necessary to breed cows.

Explaining these benefits, rather than stating the facts of

how the cattle were raised, can transform dull advertising into interesting advertising.

Which brings us to Meyocks second point, which is, advertising must be interesting. "People read, listen to or watch something that interests them... sometimes it's an ad. That's a Howard Gossage quote," he says.

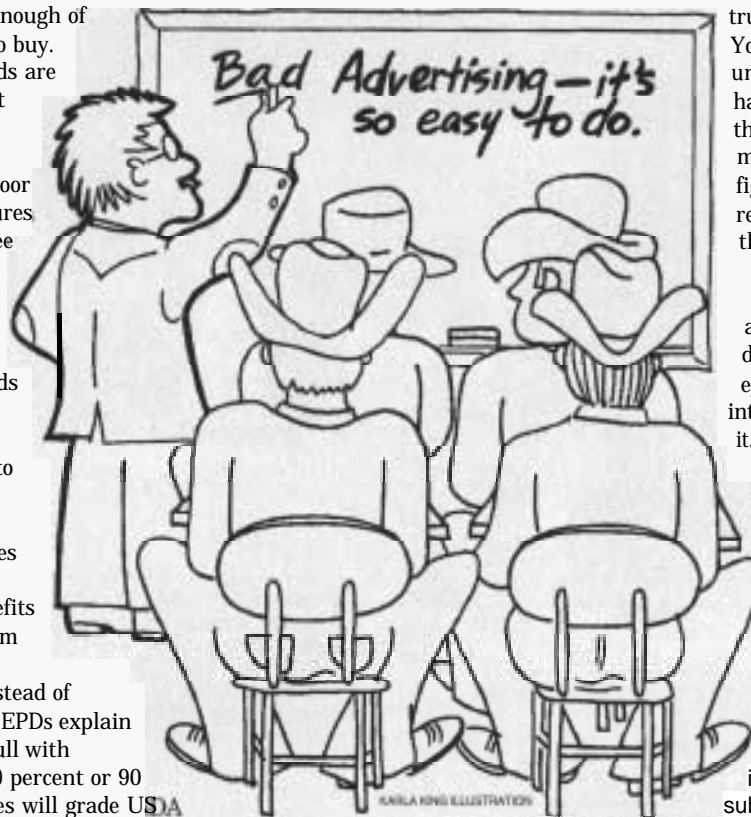
It seems so simple, yet it's so often overlooked, even though our experience proves it to be true. We are all about the same. You and I hate boring, uninteresting stuff. We will have little to do with it. Count the number of farm-related magazines you receive. Now figure what percentage you read of each issue. Farmers say they skim most of the publications they receive, looking for interesting articles and ads. You probably do too. If it doesn't catch your eye immediately, and it doesn't interest you, you probably skip it.

Why then would you expect your ads to get any better consideration?

If you have something to communicate through advertising the least you can do is make it interesting. I find myself reading ads for products I will never buy, just because the ad presents an interesting twist on the subject. On the other hand, I

often skip ads or direct mail pieces for products or services I should know more about, simply because they are dull and hard to read or understand.

As Meyocks reminds us, it's easy to do poor advertising. The way it's often done is to say yes to the salesperson and tell him or her to handle it, without bothering you. It's easy but it usually doesn't work. Why? Because people buy benefits not features. Moreover, "People read, listen to or watch something that interests them... sometimes it's an ad."



*Keith J. Evans*

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications & Public Relations