

What's Your Point of Difference?

Good advertising and a good product go hand in hand. It takes both to produce a long-term, successful business. But if you must make a choice, the product is by far the most important of the two. It's much easier and a lot faster to produce good advertising than it is to produce a good product.

Rosser Reeves, who headed the New York based advertising agency, Bates & Co., in the 1960s, once said, "Many, many years ago there were some naive manufacturers who believed they could bring you a product that had no appreciable difference over the competitor, and (they could overcome the disadvantages of the product by saying), Write good copy and make it good.' Today we know that isn't true."

Reeves, who was one of the great copywriters, advised advertisers to bring him a product that deserved to be on the market, a product that had a *point of difference* from other products. That *point of difference*, he said, should be the idea behind the advertising campaign. His advice is as sound today as when it was issued some 30 years ago.

This New York advertising executive probably never wrote an Angus cattle ad — probably never even saw one. He and his company created ad campaigns for products like Anacin or Viceroy cigarettes — products that appear to have very little difference between them and the competition. Yet, even in these products Reeves found points of *difference* that set them apart and made them attractive to buyers.

One day the Mars candy company people showed him a chocolate candy in a sugar shell. They were looking for ways to improve sales. Reeves studied this strange candy for a *point of difference* and came up with the campaign that featured the slogan, "M&M candies melt in your mouth, not in your hand."

The distinct feature of the candy was its sugar shell, that was obvious. But what did that mean to the consumer, who might think the shell would interfere with the enjoyment of the chocolate? The benefit the feature provided to the buyer was simply that the candy wouldn't melt and get messy when held in the hand.

You know the rest of the story.



Angus breeders can learn from Reeves. Breeders often look at themselves as competing with other breeds of cattle. And that is true. In this case it's fairly easy to find a *point of difference* between Angus and another breed of cattle. Although, in all fairness, too few Angus breeders exploit these differences and the benefits they offer their potential customers.

But as an Angus breeder you are also in competition with other Angus breeders. It may not be enough to have the most popular Angus genetics with balanced expected progeny difference (EPDs) and positive carcass EPDs.

Before you write your next ad or design your next campaign you might need to look at your operation and your cattle to find the *point of difference* that sets you apart from other Angus breeders in your area. One upon which you can build an advertising program.

If you have trouble doing this, ask an impartial person to evaluate your business. An outsider like an Extension livestock specialist, or someone else in the cattle business who deals with commercial cattle producers, can see things you can't.

Another good source is customers. Visit them, talk about their cattle and their program, earn their confidence, and you will likely uncover reasons why they like doing business with you. They may even give you ideas about ways you can improve and be more competitive.

You may discover there is not much difference between you and other area Angus breeders. If so, you may need to improve the product you offer; maybe not the genetics of your cattle as much as the service and convenience you offer. Free delivery, an attractive guarantee, a free junior membership to youngsters who buy heifers. They can all be *points of difference* which provide benefits that attract customers to your herd.

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