

Strong advertising must be based upon a strong strategic ad plan

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If you live on the East Coast you can get to Los Angeles by simply driving west on any road. When you reach the Pacific Ocean, turn north or south, as the case may be, and drive until you arrive in L.A.

But a more effective and efficient way might be to consult a road map and select the fastest, most convenient, most efficient way to drive there, with stops planned, and overnight reservations made in advance.

Advertising works somewhat the same way. With a strategic advertising plan you can develop an ad program that positions your business properly and builds top-of-mind awareness about your Angus business, in the right people, in the most efficient way.

There are arguably seven elements you should consider, or key questions you should answer, in developing an advertising strategy. They are:

What is your objective?

Decide what you want your customers to do when they respond to your advertising. Is it to visit your place and buy a bull or female, attend your annual sale, call or write for more information? No ad and no program should be produced without a primary objective in mind.

Who is your target audience?

Is your advertising aimed at commercial cattle producers who need bulls, or registered breeders, who buy bull semen or

registered females for herd replacements? Also where do they live, within a 25-mile or 50-mile radius of your home, throughout your state, two states or the nation? Define your market area on a map. The way you appeal to potential customers and where you place your advertising depends upon who your customers are and how you define your trade area.

Who and what is your competition?

Are most of your potential customers buying Angus bulls or other breeds, and who is supplying them? A campaign designed to compete with producers of other breeds would be quite different from a campaign to attract customers who buy Angus bulls from competing Angus breeders. When you understand your competition and what other breeders do to attract customers, you are better prepared to compete effectively with them.

What is the key benefit you offer potential customers?

Your key benefit is the most important benefit you can provide potential customers, the reason they should buy from you. It's the toughest decision you will make. All Angus breeders I know can list a number of benefits they offer to customers. But pick only one and use it. If you feel you must use more, select three or less for a year's campaign, and still feature only one in a single ad.

What other usable benefits can you offer?

Featuring a key benefit in an ad doesn't mean you shouldn't use other benefits to support your main advertising proposition and give customers additional reasons to buy. List all of your benefits when you develop your strategic plan. Select your key benefit from this list, then use the next best four or so to help convince people to buy from you.

What media are available to you?

Determine the media that cover your defined market area. Also, determine total cost per ad and divide that amount by the total number of potential customers it will reach. Use cost per potential customer reached to help evaluate various media.

For example, nearly every potential customer in a hypothetical breeder's 10-county market area may read *Beef Today*, but it might be difficult to justify the more than \$5,000 single page, four-color rate to reach a few hundred or even a few thousand potential customers. A local farm publication, radio station or rural weekly newspapers, or a combination of all three, might work better.

What will be your creative strategy?

Your creative strategy will help set your herd apart from all other seedstock sources. It will affect the look of your print ads and the tone of your radio ads. It will help make your ads readily identifiable from those of competitors. What's more, your creative strategy will give people a reason to buy from you instead of someone else. That reason is more than your key benefit. It might be the feeling of confidence and conviction that your ad program creates or the professionalism it communicates.

With at least a first draft of a strategic advertising plan in hand you are ready to consult with the professionals who will help you design your ads and your ad program. At this point the professionals can even help you fine tune your plan and flesh out your creative strategy. Without your plan even the best advertising experts can do little to help you.



ANGUS SIGN OF THE MONTH

This sign for White's Angus at Cedar Hill, Tenn., was produced by owner Jim White's son, Greg, who runs a sign business in Terre Haute, Ind. He produced it from a rough sketch supplied by his father. The sign is made of redwood and the lettering was produced by overlaying with a hard surface then sandblasting the surrounding wood. The sign was then painted and mounted on oak posts. It has brought inquiries that lead to cattle sales and is used as a community landmark for giving directions, Jim White reports.

