

OK! STOP! It's Time for Review

Two columns ago we discussed how Mississippi State University research demonstrated that herd owners who advertise and promote effectively get more money for their cattle than those who don't or who don't do it well.

Last time I explained how advertising and promotion are like exercise and dieting. Doing any of them now and then doesn't work. Success requires that we develop a program and stick with it.

The obvious questions then are: "What level of advertising and promotion do I need and what will work best for me?" As you probably guessed, or have learned from experience, there are no simple answers to these questions. Lacking specific answers here are four guidelines to help you improve your present program or develop a new one.

First, assuming that you have bred your cattle to fill a known demand, you have to know who might want to buy them and why. It is impossible to develop a successful advertising and promotion program unless you know the benefits you and your cattle offer to a very specific set of potential customers.

Customers only buy benefits — those things that solve problems, make life easier, or make them feel better about themselves and their business. Benefits are the key to selling any product from cattle to can openers. Learn the difference between features and benefits, and then determine the benefits your program offers others.

Second, find out where your potential customers are. Once you know how many potential customers do business within a

given area, you will know where to concentrate your advertising and promotion effort. If there are enough customers in your county and the surrounding counties to buy what you have to sell, then that's probably where you should concentrate your advertising and promotion effort.

The smaller your market area the easier and less expensive it is to achieve top-of-the-mind awareness among most of the potential customers in that area.



Third, you must evaluate the competition. How large a market area you settle on depends partially upon the competition you face. Remember that if you expand sales for your product you have to take customers from someone else. You can't increase the number of commercial cow-calf producers within your market area enough to build a new customer base from scratch.

Your customers, for the most part, must be established beef cattle producers. These people are already buying bulls, or semen, or replacement females from someone else.

Fourth, use all the information you have collected and develop a marketing program tailored to your circumstances. You start by asking yourself how you can tell all the potential customers in your market area about the benefits you and your program offer to them. Then you lay out a program that does it often enough and effective enough to build top-of-the-mind awareness.

You have a variety of tools at your disposal. There is print, radio and TV advertising, direct mail, sales calls, publicity, being active and well known in local, state and national Angus and beef cattle organizations, and more. Some combination of these tools will achieve the results you seek.

In the next four columns I will discuss the four points in detail:

- Selling benefits
- Locating potential customers
- Evaluating the competition
- Developing a Program.

Much of this information can also be found in the new edition of "How to Sell Angus Cattle." Copies are available free to American Angus Association members and cost only \$5 for others within the United States and Canada and \$10 elsewhere. Just write me here at the Association.

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