

# MERCHANDISING



## Admit It—You Don't Think Advertising Really Works

Admit it—there are times when paying your bills or even after you have run an ad in a publication, that you seriously wonder if advertising really works. You're not alone.

Retailers place an ad in the newspaper or on the television today and get more customers in the store tomorrow. If it doesn't happen, they know something is wrong and set out to find the problem and correct it.

But, as we have discussed before, Angus breeders aren't in retail sales. You are in business-to-business marketing, for the most part. And in this kind of merchandising, advertising works differently. And this difference can turn some advertisers into skeptics.

Take heart. A new study done by the Association of Business Publishers (ABP) and the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) has shown a well-planned business-to-business advertising program does indeed produce results. Moreover, it shows these results don't become measurable until about four months after the campaign begins. But the increased sales continue four to eight months after the close of the campaign.

The study tracked actual product sales for both a \$10 portable safety product and a \$10,000 commercial transportation component package. In both cases the results showed advertising produced more sales than with no advertising. It also showed that increased advertising frequency brought an increase in product sales.

An eight-page ad schedule (six black and white single pages and one color spread) boosted sales of the safety product nearly four times the pre-campaign level. With six black and white pages and 11 color spreads, sales reached more than six times the pre-campaign level.

The first measurable sales increases for both products began four months after



the first ads appeared. Sales for the expensive transportation component continued to increase for six months after the campaign started, and the higher sales levels continued for several months after the campaign ended.

What can you, an Angus advertiser, learn from this?

**FIRST:** be bold and aggressive. A single ad or a tentative approach to advertising probably won't work—certainly not very well.

**SECOND:** think frequency. A good advertising program should extend over a good part of each year. A 12-month schedule is best, and six months are essential. Six well-designed half pages are almost always more effective than three full pages.

**THIRD:** be patient. You may not see results for several months. But if you don't see results, find out why and make corrections. Don't stop advertising.

**FOURTH:** start early. If your production sale or your private treaty sales begin in

March, your advertising campaign should begin in December or earlier.

**FIFTH:** have a plan. The kind of results documented in the ARF/APB study are the result of well-planned advertisements, run in carefully selected publications, and targeted at very specific customers.

But the key to producing successful advertising is to start with the belief and understanding that advertising works—that it is an essential management and merchandising tool. Thanks to research like that done by ARF/APB, we have a better understanding of business-to-business advertising and sound information we can use to make our own advertising programs more effective. **A**

Director of Communications and Public Relations