

Don't Play 'Possum With Your Advertising

The 'possum who ambles down the center of the road soon dies. The same goes for advertising. That, in a nutshell, is the "possum principle of advertising."

The novel idea comes from Glenn Jamboretz, chairman of Glennon & Co. of St. Louis, Mo. "Advertising that stays in the middle of the road is dangerous," Jamboretz says. "We believe such advertising is like a 'possum. If it's in the middle of the road it dies."

Jamboretz uses an inverted bell curve that measures consumer awareness of advertising. The curve shows that about 80 percent of all advertising falls in the middle of the road — into possum territory. This advertising is lost in the clutter. Another 10 percent is remembered because of the negative reaction it creates. Only 10 percent of advertising breaks through the clutter because it is innovative and informative, according to Jamboretz's research.

Check any publication that runs a lot of registered livestock breeder advertising. The advertising will correspond with what Jamboretz found. The bulk of the advertising is middle of the road. From 5 to 10 percent irritates you with its overblown claims and bragging headlines; about 10 percent stands out as innovative and informative. Most registered livestock advertisers, it appears, actually strive to make their ads look like those of other advertisers. They take comfort in knowing that their ad looks much like the ads of "big breeders."

What does a 'possum principle registered livestock ad look like? It features a

big photo of the advertisers favorite bull or cow. At the top is a line or two of big type that looks like a headline. But it is not a headline, it is a slogan or title, or the name of the advertiser or the animal. Below the headline type and the photo float

maybe scattered all over the page. Upon occasion there is no copy at all, just a series of headline-sized labels or statements. What's missing in the typical 'possum ad is a central theme — a plan to make the ad stand out from all the rest.

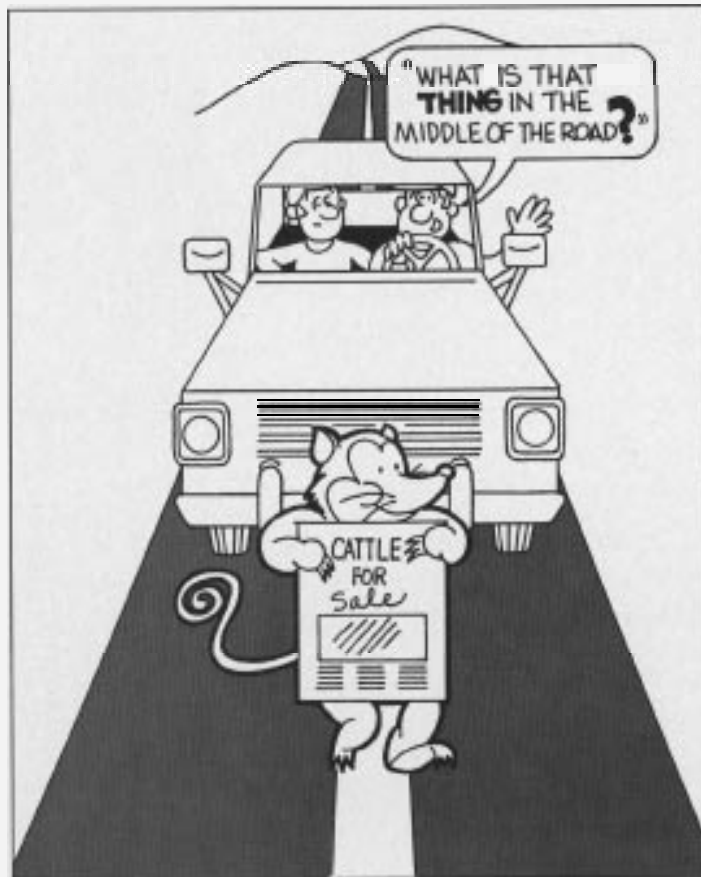
These ads do not interpret the information they contain to tell readers what it all means. They feature few if any stated benefits, no thought out sales message in the copy, and no request for the reader to act.

Now, how do you avoid this deadly syndrome? First, take charge of your advertising — don't turn it over to someone else. You know your product best and what it has to offer to your customers and potential customers. Dare to be different—consciously plan your advertising to be different from any of your competitors. Remember that a memorable, effective advertisement springs from a good idea that is executed well. When you get that good idea and execution don't discard the idea or the ad the following month. Use it time and again. Ads almost never die of overuse.

Certainly middle of the road ads accomplish something, or there wouldn't be so many of them. The point is,

with a little thought, study and advance planning, they can be made to do so much more for your business, at little or no extra cost.

Indeed, many sing the praises of straddling the center stripe. But it is a dangerous place for both 'possum and advertisement.



several small blocks of copy, a few lines of smaller headline type plus a smattering of performance information figures, pedigrees and the like. The name of the advertiser is printed at the bottom along with address and telephone number.

There are variations of this theme. Sometimes the big animal photo is replaced with a number of smaller photos,