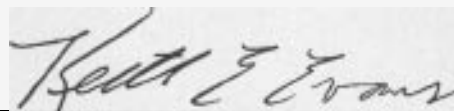


Merchandising



Director of Communications
and Public Relations

You Need A Program to Keep Your Ads Alive

Your advertising lives or dies by the program you develop and use.

Great advertising does no good if it doesn't reach the right people often enough to develop top-of-the-mind awareness. A blockbuster idea, an emotion generating photograph, an attention getting headline, or copy written by the best writer in the business are of little value if they are not seen by the people you want to communicate with, and often.

Remember, advertising is like physical fitness. A tough physical workout today won't get you into shape or keep you there. That requires an effective exercise program, day after day, week after week, year after year. There is no end to it. A great ad that appears one time in one or two publications is like the one-day workout. There is little if any payoff.

This is the last of a five-part series that began in March 1991, designed to review the basics of developing a sound marketing program. We first discussed the need to understand the benefits that your herd offers to potential buyers. You have to know what you have before you can sell it to someone else. You also must know what kind of cattle producers can use the genetic packages you develop.

Second, we looked at determining the number of potential customers you need, and where they are located. You can't buy advertising or send out direct mail without this basic information. Once you know how many you need and where they actually live, you can develop a primary market area. This is the area you blanket first with your advertising and promotion.

In the Herd Reference Edition we discussed ways to evaluate the competition. How much competition you have and what kind it is determines how large a market area you need and the merchandising approach you use. You approach your job differently, for example, if your competition is basically exotic breeds than if it is composed primarily of British breeds or just other Angus breeders.

Once you work through these areas you are ready to complete your marketing program and integrate it with your budget. You don't have a budget? Then begin by adding up all

your advertising and promotion expenses for the past year. Factor in the amount you are willing to increase your investment, and use this figure as your starting budget.

With all this information at hand, dope out the best way to deliver your best sales message, at least eight times a year, to virtually all potential customers in your market area.

Don't overlook any avenue of communication. Consider letters (direct mail), personal sales calls, telephone calls, radio and maybe TV advertising, print advertising in local newspapers, local farm publications, and state and national farm and livestock publications.

You can plan events to bring potential customers to your place, such as field days, judging contests, even auction sales.

Word of mouth promotion from agricultural leaders like bankers, Extension specialists and ag teachers works great. But they have to know enough about you and your operation to feel comfortable in recommending you to a potential customer.

There is also billboard type advertising. This can range from permanent farm signs to special event

billboards. Just remember, one type of advertising is not necessarily better than any other. The questions you must ask are: what media is available? and what combination of media will accomplish my objectives most economically?

Get as much help as you can. If a local business does a good job of marketing, make an appointment to talk with the person who designs and runs the program. Consult with your Angus regional manager. Buy a book on advertising. Read "How to Sell Angus Cattle," available free from the Association.

Get plenty of help, but keep control of your program. Don't turn responsibility over to someone else. Over the years, measure what works and what doesn't. Cut out programs and media that don't work and put the money into things that do.

In the registered business your marketing program should be one of your largest single out-of-pocket expenses. It makes sense to give it the attention it deserves.

