

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications
and Public Relations

How to Make More Friends and More Sales

"Know the difference between a 747 and a bunch of farmers?" a farm products salesman asks his audience to kick off a meeting. "The difference," he says, "is you can stop a 747 from whining just by shutting off its engines."

Needless to say, little the man said the remainder of the evening made much of an impression on the crowd. The cardinal rule for anyone who sells is to be likable. The program presenter was too caught up in what to him was a funny story to realize that you can't impress anyone by making them the butt of a demeaning joke.

Roger Ailes, author of *Secrets of the Master Communicators* reminds us that, "People who are unlikable complain about their problems, jabber constantly about meaningless things and talk in a monotone. They are overly serious and rarely smile or joke about anything. They are usually self centered," he says.

On the other hand, Ailes describes likable people as optimistic. "Likable people are genuinely concerned about the well-being of other people. Likable people simply lend a hand, smile, mind their own business and laugh easily—especially at themselves."

We all know people who fit into both categories. We also know sales people who fit into both categories, but not many successful ones. People buy and deal with other people they like and trust. We all prefer to be around people who make us feel good about ourselves and whatever it is we are buying.

How many people who sell bulls, automobiles or tractors have you run into in your career who started out by telling you how tough business is, and what a mess the community and world is in? You probably can't count them. But likely you didn't end up doing business with them. It is easier to excuse yourself after a reasonable period of time and go on down the road to deal

with someone whose view of the world doesn't make you feel like jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge.

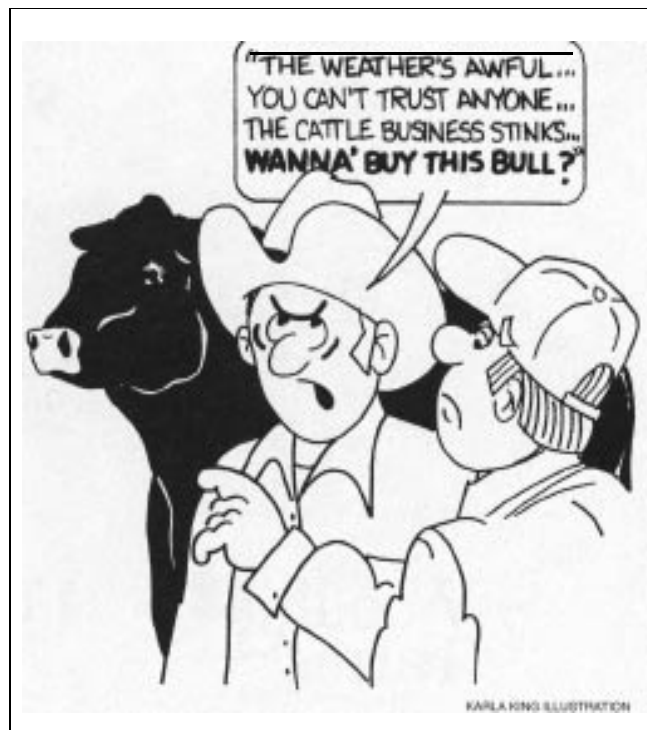
I have known an Angus breeder for a long time who is always complaining. He is the kind of guy you avoid in a crowd if at all possible. You know that anything he has to say will be negative and depressing. And it is no accident that what he has

to say concerns the fact that business is bad and "old so-and-so" is selling no-good cattle for ridiculous high prices. It has never occurred to him that his problems are mostly of his own making, namely his view of the world, of other people, the Angus business and his unlikable self.

I am no psychologist, but I feel sure that really unlikable people will never change. For some reason they simply can't see the disagreeable side of themselves. On the other hand, there are those people who are so naturally likable that they simply sparkle. They draw a crowd and if they are sales people they draw customers like hummingbirds to honeysuckle. And they couldn't change either, even if they wanted to.

Then that leaves the rest of us, who now and then exhibit unlikable characteristics that we can do something about. People can improve their likability, according to Roger Ailes, just by being conscious of how they act and what they say around people.

By shifting from the pessimistic complainer approach to the optimistic, upbeat approach to life, we can be better sales professionals. Which means we will sell more cattle for better prices. That alone should tend to make us more optimistic and more likable and better sales people.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Evans".