

## Good Ads are a Result of Teamwork

"I've been trying to write ad copy for this guy. I've turned myself inside out and looked within, and found myself empty."

This is the lament of one regional manager in the throes of preparing an advertisement for the Herd Reference Edition. It could have been your ad he was working on. If so it's too bad, because no ad writer should ever find himself in that situation. Not, at least, if the advertiser does his or her job properly.

Production of attention getting, convincing advertising is most always the result of teamwork and close cooperation between the advertiser and creative staff of an agency or publication. If even one member of the team fails, then the ad will likely fail.

The guy sweating blood trying to produce an effective ad for a client almost surely had not been provided with enough information and ideas. That's not uncommon. Far too many people in this business don't like to deal with advertising. They agree to buy an ad then load the entire responsibility on the publication's back. It's about the way I do income tax. I hate thinking about taxes, let alone preparing them. I unload the stuff on my accountant and get out of his office as fast as I can. If I forget to tell him about a possible deduction or fail to include a canceled check, I lose money. If I fail to report income to him, I risk getting in trouble with the IRS. But it isn't his fault. He can't help me if I don't give him what he needs to do the job.

Same is true with your



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advertising. Only you know the full story of your herd. Only you know your customers and the kind of cattle they prefer. Keep all this a secret from the people who work on your advertising and it never gets used. Those people, like my accountant, are not psychic.

If I were going to write an ad or design a program for you then I'd put you through the third degree. First I'd ask you what you want to sell in the ad. "Bulls," you say, then how many, what kind, what are their sires, what are their performance records? Are they calving-ease bulls or terminal sires? The advertiser should know almost as much about these bulls as you do.

Second, I'd ask you what kind of potential customer are interested in talking to in your ad. "Bull buyers," you say. Then what kind? Are

they registered breeders or commercial cattle producers. Where do they live and what do you want readers of your ad to do—give you a call? Come to your place? Write for a sale catalog? I'd have you describe one of your real customers to me whom you consider to be typical. How many cows does he have, how many bulls does he buy a year? What traits does he consider to be most important to his business? How does he market his cattle?

Third, I'd ask you what potential buyers will gain if they buy your bulls. What benefits will they receive? How can your bulls make the buyer look better, feel better or earn more money? I'd want you to be very specific.

I would let you reel off a few ideas from the top of your head. You would have to tell me the most important

benefits you can provide the customer. Then list them in order of importance. I would need to know the single most valuable thing you have to sell. Not to make it the focus of your ad would be a big mistake.

Finally I'd ask what kind of illustration do you have, or would suggest to illustrate this advertisement. Even though you will likely hire someone to take the photo, you need to think about it in advance, and provide as many ideas as possible. Your ideas will stimulate even better ideas in the mind of the photographer and the ad writer.

Answering questions like this can be hard work. It can make you sweat; give you a headache. It can cause you to worry. Have you missed anything, or listed the wrong benefits first? But when you have finished you have the satisfaction of knowing you have done your part to create good advertising.

This will assure that the person who writes your ad will not find himself or herself empty. The writer will have a wealth of information to draw from to create an effective ad. The number one benefit will become the theme for the ad. It will be used to write the headline. The remainder of the benefits can be worked into the ad copy to support your claims and create even more interest.

Planning and cooperation are the keys to great advertising. The results will surprise and delight you.

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications & Public Relations