



Merchandising

► by Keith Evans

Emotion drives sales

Most cattle producers will tell you that the bulls they buy, the seeds they plant and the pickups they drive all were the result of practical, rational, economic business decisions. But don't you believe it.

Hard facts and economics certainly play a big part in most business purchases, but noneconomic factors are more important than we realize or will admit. That's why the most effective advertising and marketing programs appeal to the prospects' emotions and their intellect.

Feel the difference

Let's face it; if every purchase of every product were strictly rational and logical, there would likely be fewer breeds of cattle used in this country and fewer breeders. There definitely would be fewer brands of trucks and automobiles.

Certainly, there would be fewer brands of laundry detergents, beer, cosmetics and a plethora of other consumer goods that have no real practical advantages over their competitors and are marketed almost entirely upon emotional appeal.

If people used only their intelligence to make decisions, few would have gone broke jumping into livestock business schemes that promised quick wealth with little or no effort. We never would have witnessed the llama and ostrich crazes, not to mention the belt-buckle or long-legged cattle crazes.

You may well be the exception who can resist an advertisement's emotional appeal, but to be a good marketer, you must understand that most people will open their pocketbooks in response to emotional factors.

Intangible benefits

Appealing to a buyer's emotions does not mean using deception — just the opposite. Emotional benefits are real, although more subtle than what we might think of as practical benefits, such as expected progeny differences (EPDs), that are more straightforward and easily measured.

Peace of mind is an emotional benefit. A seller can provide that in many ways. You may or may not want to headline your ad "You'll sleep better when you buy a Jones bull," but your marketing program should convey that idea. It involves such things as your guarantees and your reputation for fairness and ability to produce high-quality cattle.

You probably will not use a headline that reads, "Have a great time and associate with some of the best cattle people in the world at our presale party and auction." However, this is something you want to get across to potential and past customers. People like having fun, associating with other good cattle producers and combining business with pleasure. There are many breeders with good cattle, but buying from some is a lot more fun than buying from others.

All breed associations have members who are so emotionally tied to their breed that nothing could persuade them to change. That kind of brand loyalty is important and is usually based upon more than market prices.

To foster such feelings of loyalty, breed associations invest a good deal of time and money into junior programs, national conferences, shows and well-planned social events. They help build strong breed ties. For an active member to change breeds involves

a great deal more than a business decision. It means breaking with tradition and dissolving strong business and social ties.

Sweet music

Breeders should strive for that kind of brand loyalty within their own cattle business. Many successful breeders have achieved it. They know how important it is to be a friend to their customers, to understand their problems and to work closely with them to solve those problems.

They know how important it is to attract junior members, and they do everything they can to keep those youngsters in business and their parents happy with their children's junior projects. Breeders often host special customer-appreciation days, open houses or field days to build brand loyalty, to attach their customers emotionally to them and to their cattle programs.

We all know about popular bull lines and how breeders can become attached to them. It is often more than just genetics; it is the confidence they feel and the satisfaction they get from using a successful genetic line. Successful advertisers exploit that fact by building advertising programs around the mystique of a bull and his offspring, as well as his outstanding genetics.

Take advertising itself. Most of us feel that we are influenced little by advertising and its appeal to our emotions. But if that's true, why do customers patronize one breeder more than another breeder who has cattle of nearly identical quality? Advertising works, and advertising that includes emotional benefits works even better.

Emotion is but one key on the piano of marketing. Played alone, it soon will get tiresome. But by using the emotion key with the others to compose a catchy marketing tune, you may produce music like the legendary Pied Piper — music that entices customers to follow you to the front door of your seedstock business.

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