

doing a better job

MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

For years I thought my children had stock in the local movie house. They saw every movie made and some of them five times. When the urge to see a movie hit, they knew not only which section of the newspaper to look in, but also what page the movie ads would be on.

Some people think movie houses spend a lot of money on advertising, but they don't. Nationally, they invest only 3.4 percent of their gross income on advertising. This compares with retail furniture stores that spend around 7.5 percent of their gross and some registered cattle producers who invest 10 percent. What the movie houses have going for them that most other advertisers lack is consistency and regularity. They don't run the largest ads in the newspaper, but they advertise every day, 365 days a year. You, like my kids, always know that if you want to find out about the movies, the ads will be in their accustomed location in the paper.

It is impossible to equate movie advertising with Angus cattle advertising, but your business is more like the movie business than you might imagine. By studying movie advertising, you may be able to improve your own advertising.

We are all impulse buyers to a certain extent. This was brought home to me years ago on a Sunday afternoon when a friend of mine decided he wanted a convertible. In those days in Chicago there weren't many car dealers open on Sunday, but he found one that was, and that afternoon traded cars and drove home in a new Chevy convertible. My friend had no loyalty to the dealer he traded with; he had never been there before, and never since. That dealership just happened to be open that Sunday afternoon and had an ad in the Sunday newspaper.

Over the years I have seen people buy tractors, combines, furniture, homes, and yes even cattle, on impulse. When some commercial cattle producers decide that tomorrow is the day they should start breeding cows, that is when they buy bulls. Two things have a big influence on where they buy: The name of the registered cattle breeder who comes to mind first, and the advertising read in the current issue or issues of livestock publications. If that cattle producer has been seeing your ads in every issue of the publications he reads, and when he opens up the publication he sees your ad there in front of him along with your telephone number and directions to your farm, there is a good chance that you will be the first person he contacts.

Which brings up the point—which is more important, the size of the ad you run or the frequency with which it runs? Fact is, that except for special instances, frequency is most important. If for some reason you need to get people to see one or two special ads, then obviously size is important. If you must be seen

in the Herd Reference edition of the Angus Journal, you will need a well planned 4-color spread—if not more—to get the majority of people to read and remember your ad.

Otherwise, the money spent on two or three full page ads a year, regardless of the livestock publication, would likely pay bigger dividends if divided up so that a well designed partial-page ad appears in the magazine every issue. So you determine frequency first, then run the largest, best planned and designed ads possible.

You may remember the story that appeared in the Angus Journal last month about a relatively small Minnesota Angus breeder. He advertises in two publications for the most part—in the Sunday classified section of a major metropolitan daily newspaper, and in a single regional farm publication. He has narrowed these two down as his best local advertising buy, and then he advertises in every issue. He doesn't spread his advertising money around to make ad sales people happy, he concentrates it in the places that he knows do him the most good, and he doesn't miss an issue. His sales prove that his advertising program is correct.

The disconcerting thing about advertising is that there are no hard and fast rules. But fortunately we can learn to do better advertising from people who are most successful at it.

People who merchandise all kinds of products will tell you that "top-of-the-mind awareness" is probably the best single thing any product or retailer can have going. If you are known as "Mr. Angus" in your community, all other things being equal, then you will be the first person people call when they are interested in Angus cattle. That is top-of-the-mind awareness.

You achieve this enviable position with a well planned and ongoing advertising and promotion program with plenty of frequency. When you think about it, your bull customers may not be so different from my kids, the movie customers, after all.

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