

# doing a better job

## MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Don't take this personally, but there's not a commercial cattle producer out there anywhere sitting on the edge of his or her chair, waiting for some new information about your registered Angus herd.

Not a single ear is glued to a radio for the announcement of your next sale or the fact that your bulls, just off test, have the best records ever. As for all the hard work, money and worry you have put into developing your herd—nobody cares.

Not only do many commercial cattle producers generally think most Angus cattle are about alike, some don't even see much difference between breeds of cattle. And certainly there is no shortage of bulls. Your customers can buy registered bulls by the truckload almost everywhere.

If indifference to your product, and a near market glut characterize the registered bull business, and they do, then how do you advertise your cattle to stimulate the necessary sales volume to show a profit?

Chuck Cilo, an executive from a New York advertising agency, points out successful advertisers must grab people by their lapels and make them watch, listen and feel. Just presenting the facts often isn't enough, he says, unless those facts are so startling or so motivating that appealing to emotion is unnecessary. Your hard, cold facts are usually too similar to the hard, cold facts presented by your competition—they just can't carry the entire selling responsibility. In a situation like this, Cilo says, "logic should yield to emotion."

One look at the mass of ads in any livestock publication shows that most everyone of every breed advertises size, growth rate, maternal traits and to some extent calving ease—even in herds made up of breeds that could never by any stretch of the imagination be thought of as calving-ease bulls. It is difficult to be different and more dramatic than the competition when you present this kind of in-

formation. One solution is to take a close look at your operation and single out those things that are different, that involve the human element in your business, and then feature these points in an emotional sales appeal.

For example, you probably offer what amounts to an unconditional guarantee on any bulls you sell. If you do, then you might consider advertising this fact. If everyone else in the newspaper or magazine is showing a photograph of their herd bull "Mister Wonderful" in a majestic pose, gazing fondly across the fence at a group of open heifers, you might get more attention with a high-quality closeup photo of you with a few cattle in the background. The headline and theme of the ad could be that in this world of uncertainty, you guarantee your bulls to be sound, or you replace them or refund the money, unconditionally. It is an emotional appeal. Everyone can remember at least once when they weren't treated fairly, and this approach takes advantage of the emotions this memory produces.

There is a lot of emotion tied to families and family-farm operations. If your family likes to work together, produces quality cattle and welcomes people to your place, then maybe this

is an angle you can use. An attractive photograph of your family involved in the Angus cattle operation with appropriate headline and copy can make an emotional appeal that will stop people in their tracks as they leaf through a magazine. More than that, it can influence them to come to your place to meet and do business with the people in the ad.

It is not that facts don't count for anything—they do. How your cattle perform in the end is vital to your customers and to your repeat business. Once your ads have grabbed the attention of readers, then you tell them your story, and that means laying out the facts in a well-planned sales message.

It is true no one cares about your operation, at least not until you grab them by the lapels with your ad, yank them out of their indifference and make them look and listen to what you have to say. A fresh approach that lifts your advertising above the ordinary and includes the proper emotional appeal will be read and remembered by potential customers.

And memorable advertising is the only kind that can lead to more sales.

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