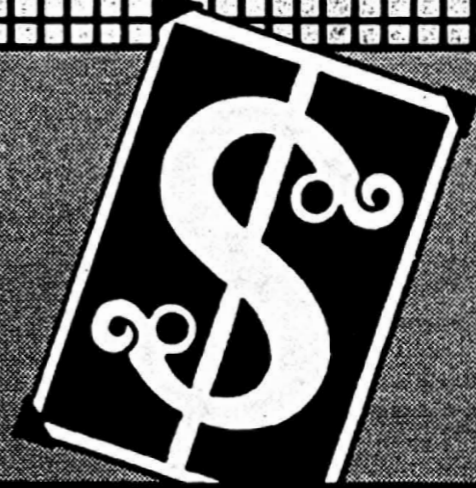
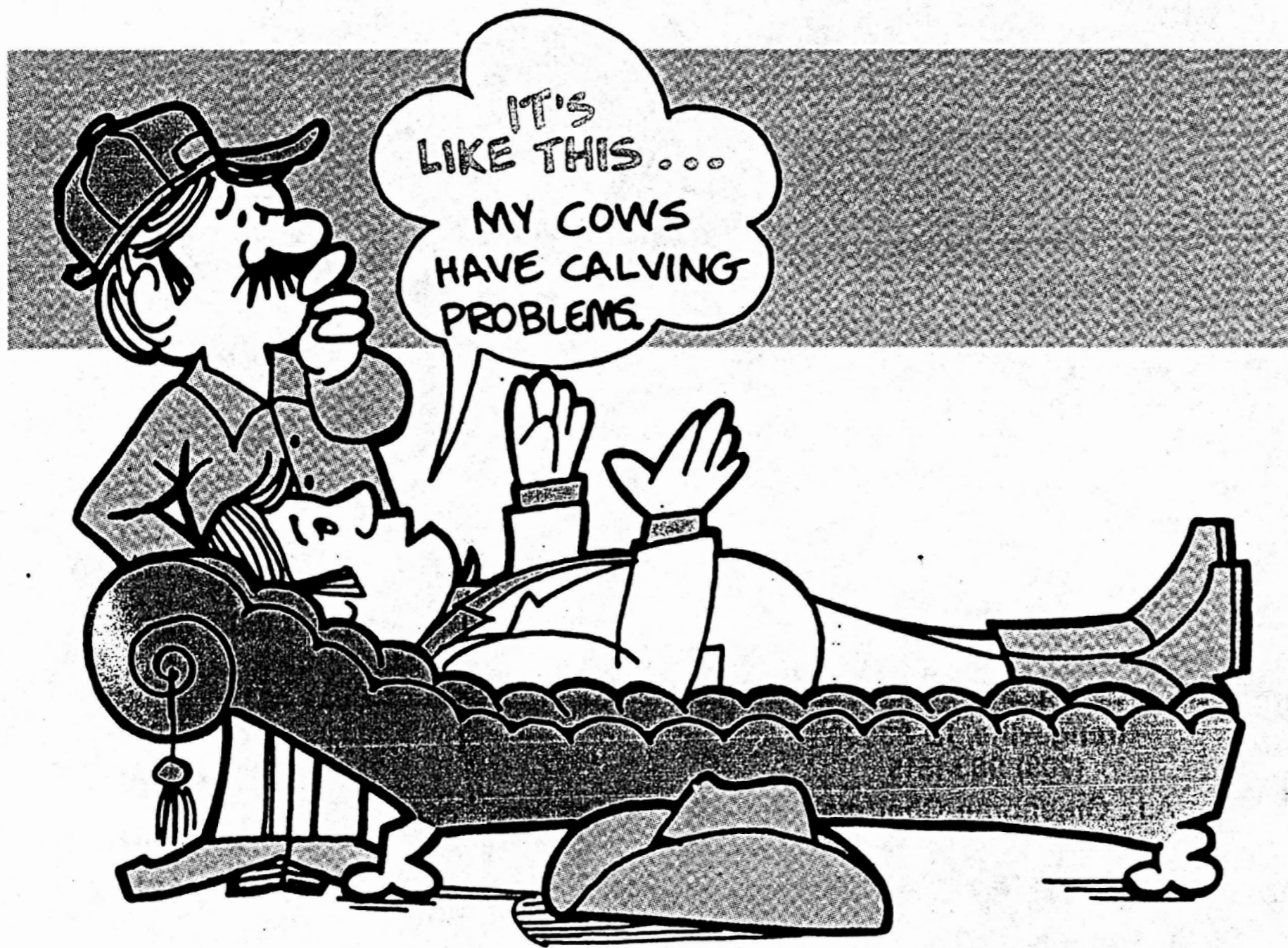


MERCHANDISING



Sell with your ears, not your mouth



If you stop and think, you no doubt can recall at least one time when a sales person did not listen to a thing you said. Instead they charged headlong in an attempt to sell you something you had no need of or no interest in buying. In frustration or disgust you probably took your business elsewhere.

Not listening to the customer or potential customer is a deadly mistake. Aggressiveness and a gift of gab, many people believe are prerequisites for being a good salesman. And why not? These are the stereotypes we grew up seeing in the movies and on television.

Certainly an ability to communicate effectively is important in sales as it is in many other jobs. But listening, not talking, is the mark of a successful sales person.

There is no way to divine what a potential customer's problems are. The only effective way for you to find out is to have the prospect tell you as you listen carefully and understand. If calving problems are eating the potential customer's lunch, you recommend a far different bull than if weaning or yearling weights are the problem. And, since everyone wants heavier weaning weights if they can get them, you may never get to the heart of a customer's problems unless you encourage them to tell you about their cattle operation and management.

By the same token it's important to know how much or how little the potential customer knows about a number of things, including performance records. Should the customer not understand Expected Progeny Differences for example,

you won't make much of an impression showing off these records until you have first explained what EPDs are and how they can help make accurate decisions.

Once you have the information you need, the next step is to quickly analyze the situation, determine what you have that can solve the buyer's problems, then translate all this into benefits that the buyer will enjoy if he or she buys your cattle.

For example, you don't sell a minus two pound X birthweight EPD. You sell fewer sleepless nights, lower vet bills, more live calves, and faster rebreeding of the cows, which translates into higher weaning weights and more income the following year.

When you sell a prospect Angus bulls for the first time, you don't sell the Certified Angus Beef program, you sell the benefits that this program can provide. Those benefits are an expanded market for calves and potential premiums some packers pay for carcasses that qualify for the CAB program. You don't sell a polled head, you sell freedom from dehorning and the expense and grief it causes. You don't sell black skin, you sell no sunburned udders and no cancer eye.

Advertising and salesmanship are two sides of the merchandising coin. Advertising doesn't sell Angus cattle; it creates interest, builds desire, and gets people to contact you or come out to your place to look at cattle. Salesmanship puts the money in the bank. Salesmanship takes that interest and desire that your advertising and promotion have created, and turns it into cash.

Salesmanship frightens many people because they feel that they aren't good talkers. To overcome this, always keep in mind that good selling involves listening, not talking. And by listening, you just may be able to turn more of your Angus cattle into sales and profits. **AJ**

Director of Communications and Public Relations