

## Top-of-the-Mind Advertising

A while back some Angus breeders decided not to advertise their bull sales in the Angus Beef Bulletin because that publication would be mailed some two months ahead of their auction. The breeders figured that the commercial cow-calf producers who read the Bulletin would forget unless they read the ad a few weeks before sale date.

These advertisers evidently forgot one of the basic principles of advertising to business clients. Namely, that the advertising you do today or this month generally won't affect your sales much tomorrow or even next month.

Selling bulls is business to business advertising as opposed to retail advertising. And the buying cycle, the period between when a reader first sees your ads until he or she decides to spend money with you, is several months, not several days or weeks. A month or less before your sale your promotion program probably should run more to reminders of the message you have already implanted in the minds of potential buyers. This type of advertising is done with radio, direct mail or even personal telephone calls.

Your primary advertising, on the other hand, should be designed to convince potential buyers within your market area, that you and your cattle offer benefits they can use. You repeat your story long enough and often enough to achieve top-of-the-mind awareness.

Then when these people think of Angus bulls, they will think of you. And when they think of you they will recall some of the benefits you stressed in your advertising. You also want them to be interested enough to write your sale date on their calendar. Once you have achieved this it is a relatively simple matter to get them to your place in a buying frame of mind.

Top-of-the-mind awareness isn't usu-

ally achieved fast. It is the result of a consistent, well-planned program that more or less runs year around.

Some fairly recent research, done for business advertisers, tracked two products: One that sold for a few dollars and the other that cost some \$10,000. When advertising began to appear in trade publications for both products it took about four months to boost sales significantly.

When the advertising was discontinued, sales stayed at the higher levels for about four months, then declined to pre-advertising levels.

There is nothing new or revolutionary about this study. It confirms what good advertisers already knew. If you break the handle out of your hammer today, or even decide that today is the day you are going to buy a new truck, you probably won't run to the newspaper to check for hardware store or truck ads. More than likely you will head directly to a store or a dealership. The decision of where to go was made months or years earlier. Your business will go to a business that has achieved top-of-the-mind awareness with you.

So in your fight for customers don't ignore two basic principles that govern much of business-to-business advertising and sales: First, advertising that you do today won't have much affect on tomorrow's sales. Second, achieving top-of-the-mind awareness in your market area is vital to long-term success.

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