

Odds and Ends At End of the Year

Every now and then you have to clean out the garage or the farm shop. The only pleasure this gives you, aside from having everything back in its place where you can find it, is discovering the things you forgot you had saved.

I cleaned out my column file the other day and came across clippings and notes that had been put aside but never used. They just wouldn't work into a full column. So here they are, a few odds and ends at the end of the year that you may find helpful.

There are a lot of half-baked ideas floating around about advertising. Not only are these ideas not true, they mislead advertisers into doing things that they shouldn't do. Here are four things that research has shown about advertising that you may not know:

1. Ads that run on left hand pages are just as well read as ads that run on right hand pages. The same is true for ads that run in the front third, middle third or back third of a publication. Still, advertisers worry about the position their ad has in the publication. In fact, since many publications carry more right hand pages of advertising than left, left hand pages sometimes get more readership.

2. Unusual shaped ads that jut out into the editorial copy do attract more attention and get more readership. If too many advertisers do it the device can lose its effectiveness. Some publications won't allow you to run these kind of ads, but it may be worth a try. The only people who read your ads are the people who notice them.

3. Full page magazine ads that run next to each other are just as effective as ads that run next to editorial. A lot of people worry about this. They want their ad to run next to an interesting, exciting piece of editorial that everyone is going to read. Problem is the editorial may be so good that it steals attention from your ad. One study showed that ads next to each other actually increased readership. Another study showed no difference.

4. The two things that make an ad most effective are the creative work and the reader's interest in the message. This is one explanation for why even poorly

designed breeder ads get results in livestock publications. The readers of these publications are interested in what the advertiser is selling. It also explains why really well done ads in a livestock publication get so much better readership.

A headline flag or kicker can help you reach a more specific audience and boost the readership of your ads. For example, if you want to sell calving ease bulls and your headline reads, "We have 20 birthweight bulls with EPDs of +2 pounds or less" you might write the headline as shown below. The kicker will catch the eye of those who have suffered because of calving problems.

Tired of pulling calves?

We Have 20 Birthweight Bulls With EPDs of +2 Pounds or Less

Some advertisers like to wrap copy around an illustration to create a special effect. It can work to your advantage, but when you or the person designing your ad tries it be sure and keep the type to the left and the illustration to the right.

The reason is that people are accustomed to reading copy that is flush on the left (flush left) and uneven on the right (ragged right). You see this in some magazines, newspapers and newsletters. When copy is set ragged left and flush right it is difficult for the eye to move from the end of one line to the beginning of the next one. People soon stop reading anything that gives them a problem.

Remember that building an ad is somewhat like building a fence. You can buy posts, wire, staples, stretchers and a post hole digger, but you don't have a fence. By the same token you can assemble type, photos, your logo and buy space in a magazine, but you don't have an advertisement. In both cases it takes planning, understanding of the project, and skill in execution to get the desired results.



KARLA KING ILLUSTRATION