

## Use One-Shot, One-Idea Approach to Advertising

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A single-minded approach to advertising — one goal and one dominant theme repeated over and over — is the most efficient way to advertise. The more ideas and the more benefits an advertiser tries to explain and promote to potential buyers, the larger the investment required to achieve top-of-mind awareness.

This was brought home to me the other day by a list of the top retail advertisers. As many of you know, Wal-Mart is the nation's largest retailer. Their 1995 gross sales totaled some \$93.6 billion. Second in 1995 was K-Mart with just over \$33 billion in sales and Sears was a close third with sales of \$31.5 billion.

What's interesting about this is the amount of money each of

these companies invest in advertising.

Wal-Mart, the largest retailer, had a 1995 ad budget of some \$338.7 million. Sears, with dollar sales about one-third those of Wal-Mart's, spent a whopping \$1.2 billion on advertising in 1995. Just for your information, K-Mart's 1995 ad expenditures were \$428.4 million.

How can Wal-Mart, with triple the sales of Sears, get by with an ad budget one third the size of Sears? Primarily because Wal-Mart has a single-minded message. Their advertising is based upon the fact that they provide quality products at low cost — "Always a low price." Sears, on the other hand, heavily advertises its various departments almost as if they

were separate, individual stores — hardware, appliances, clothing, etc. It costs a lot of money to advertise this way and Sears' advertising expenses reflect it.

This is, no doubt, an overly simplified explanation of the differences between two of the world's largest retailers. Still, I have no doubt that it's accurate, as far as it goes. The more ideas an advertiser tries to implant in a potential buyer's mind, the more money must be invested in advertising and promotion. There is no way around it.

What does that mean to you, an advertiser of registered Angus cattle? It means that in order to promote your business efficiently, you need to focus your efforts and your appeal to potential customers rather than use a scatter-shot approach.

Start by making an important decision. If your potential customers could know only one thing about you or your business, what would it be? More than likely that should be the foundation of your advertising and marketing program.

What's more, that single-minded theme must be yours alone within your marketing area. It's no good promoting your herd as "Performance cattle managed under practical commercial conditions," if someone else has already established this position for their own herd. Me-too advertising is weak advertising.

Once you have settled upon the single most important, advertisable benefit you have to offer your buyers, then hammer it home in all of your promotion. This includes advertising, business cards,

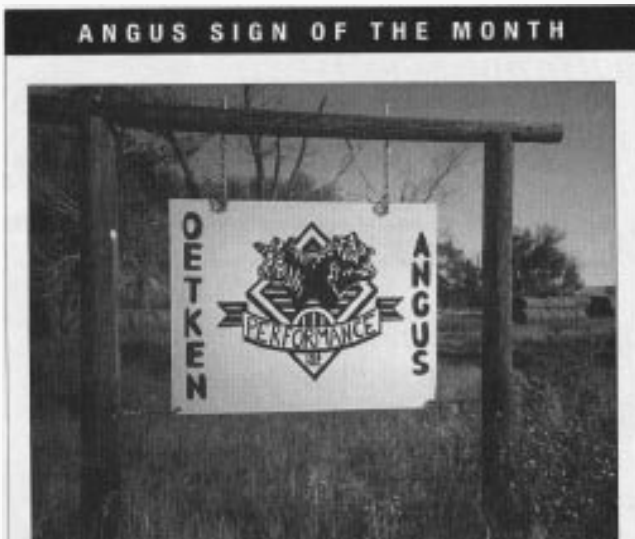
letterheads, herd logo, truck and trailer signs, and road signs.

Every advertisement you do should be built on the dominant theme you select.

For example, let's assume that you position your herd as family owned and operated, which allows you to provide high quality, performance tested bulls at competitive prices. You might develop a positioning statement that says, "The family-owned source for top performance Angus." From that point on, every ad you run should be built around that theme, whatever you are selling. When potential Angus buyers have a need for Angus you want them to think of you first and favorably as, what else, "The family-owned source for top performance Angus," and all that your positioning statement implies.

I know this all sounds like utter nonsense to some advertisers who insist every ad they produce be "new and different" and built upon a new, fresh idea, with a new theme. However, if you have doubts about your advertising; if you think you aren't getting a big enough return on your advertising investment, then take a cue from Wal-Mart.

You might be able to triple the effectiveness of your advertising investment over the long run by taking a single minded approach. On the other side of the coin, if your advertising budget is far larger than it should be, then a more focused program might allow you to get similar or better results, with a lower investment



*This month's featured Angus sign was submitted by Janet Oetken Mars/and, Neb. She designed and painted the sign herself on a heavy piece of metal. It's secured by chains to what appears to be old utility poles. The overall size is 5 x 8 feet, and has generated a lot of compliments, Oetken says. If you have an Angus farm sign you are proud of, send me an attractive, close-up photograph with no distracting background, and will be considered for publication.*

