

Merchandising

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Memorable ads are benefit-driven

There are reasons why ads run by most large, successful companies look so much different than ads run by many registered beef cattle producers.

Big advertisers invest millions of dollars in advertising. As a result, they leave as little to chance as possible. The ads they produce are tested to find out which ones people read and remember. Testing and experience have shown them that simple, well-designed ads with a single theme and one primary benefit have much more impact than complex ads.

Many registered livestock producers don't know this. They don't like to invest in advertising, and they don't test their ads for response. When they buy an ad, they want to tell their whole story and get it over with. It's difficult to resist the temptation to cram ads with facts, photos and headlines.

The judges for the 1997 Livestock Publications Council (LPC) contest warn that cluttered ads are too much of an overload for the reader. "I just want to turn the page," one judge complains of many of the ads he saw in livestock publications. "You can't close a sale in a single ad," another judge observed, "and it's costly to try."

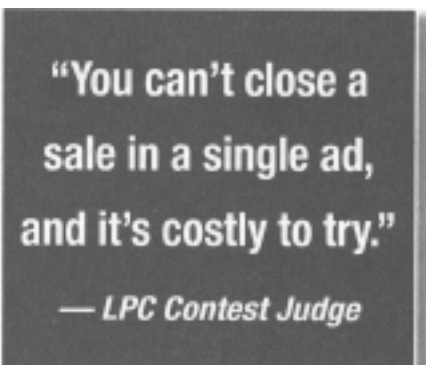
There is nothing unusual about these observations. Judges for the LPC contest have been saying virtually the same thing each year I have been going to the convention.

One contest judge, an experienced advertising person, holds up the "Nuflor 4 3...2...1..." ad as an example of a simple, effective ad. You probably have read it in the past year. I really like the "Commando ear tag" ad that ran in publications this past summer. It features a close-up of a face fly with a headline that reads "Your enemies have evolved. Have your ear tags?"

Another ad I like is for the GMC Sierra pickup. It shows how the doors open to give easy access to both the front and back seats. The headline, above a beautiful photo of the truck with its doors wide open, reads, "Life is full of hurdles. Getting in and out of your

pickup shouldn't be one of them." It recognizes that two-seat trucks are often used more for transportation than hauling, and it makes a point that hits home, particularly if you have ever squeezed into the back seat of some trucks.

Each of these advertisers sells complicated products. They could fill an advertisement with product features,



photos, testimonials and treatises. But they don't. Not because they have nothing else to say, but because they know the clutter would keep people from reading and remembering the ad. They know the first job of an ad is to stop people. The second job is to make an important and memorable point, one that will provide a benefit and establish the advertiser's name in the reader's mind.

Never forget the one judge's point, that you can't close a sale in a single ad. It's a rare registered Angus cattle ad that results in the reader telephoning the advertiser with an order to ship him a bull or a truckload of bulls. Good ads get attention, build awareness and prompt people to investigate the advertised product further. When the reader gets in touch with the advertiser, or comes to visit, then it's time to tell the whole story, to answer questions and make points that will lead to a sale.

Memorable ads, the judge points out, are benefit-driven. Benefit-driven ads don't waste time talking about product features.

The ear tag ad, for example, doesn't confuse you with all the fly killing products that are incorporated into the tag and what chemicals hold them together so just the right amount is released to keep off flies. They don't explain how they have overcome the fly resistance problem. Who cares? The ad shows the enemy close-up, a face fly that robs cattle producers of profits. The headline tells you that it will work because it has been formulated to kill insecticide-resistant flies. What else do you want to know?

In an average Angus Journal, there are 250 pages of editorial and advertising. The competition for the reader's eye is intense. And that's the way it should be. You want to advertise in a publication that people read and use. Your job is to make your ads stand out, to be noticed, read and remembered.

The LPC judges also urge livestock advertisers to use pleasing colors that complement each other and draw the eye into the ad. Never, they say, use black type over dark photos, you can't read it. For that matter, never use dark type over a dark background. Red on blue, for example, is almost impossible to read in print.

They urge advertisers to put more order in their ads. If you must use more than one cattle illustration, then place them together to form a solid illustration block. Keep copy simple and easy to read. Don't fill an ad with large bold type that never provides a place for the eye to stop and rest. Ads should be pleasing to look at and easy and enjoyable to read.

The next time you sit down with your favorite magazine, make it a point to identify the ads you enjoy. Then incorporate their design and appealing points into your own advertisements. Your ads can have the look and the effectiveness of those run by the best advertisers in the world.