

Merchandising

by Keith Evans



The power of marketing — Part 2

Let's assume that your teenage daughter has set aside today to purchase a new outfit for an upcoming special occasion. What will she do the first thing this morning — turn on the television or check the newspaper for trendy clothing store ads? Not likely.

If your daughter is like you or most of the rest of us, she will grab her credit card, get in the car and drive directly to the Unique Boutique or some similar place and begin her search for that outfit. Why? Because the business has established top-of-mind

awareness with your daughter. When she wants a new outfit, she thinks first and favorably of the Unique Boutique.

They may or may not sell her the clothes, depending upon a number of things that could happen at the store. But because of top-of-mind awareness, they get first crack at her business.

"Not me," you say. "I'm too smart for that." Well, think again, because it has nothing to do with being a smart consumer and everything to do with being a smart marketer.

Assume that you will need a new tractor before spring planting season and that today you have time to begin your search. Almost surely you know today what brand of tractor you prefer and with which dealer you would rather do business. You may even know the individual with whom you would prefer to work. That's top-of-mind awareness, and because of this you will contact that sales person at your preferred dealership and begin the process.

Top-of-mind awareness works for most kinds of advertising. If you are repairing the barn and the handle breaks out of your only hammer, you won't run for the newspaper to look at hardware ads. You will drive

directly to a particular store, buy the hammer and get back to work — top-of-mind awareness. Every business owner on the planet covets top-of-mind awareness of every potential customer within the market area. It should be no different for your registered Angus business.

A few years ago a friend of mine who breeds registered cattle — but hates to invest money in advertising and promotion for his herd — called me with a great idea.

He wanted to develop a cooperative advertising program with fellow breeders in his part of the state and promote the area as a top source of registered seedstock.

"Given time, it will work," I assured him, "but remember, when producers come to the area to look for bulls or replacement females, they will go first to the

best-known and best-

liked breeders. You will likely only get referrals."

So how do you develop top-of-mind awareness? By developing a marketing program that keeps your name in front of the buying public, virtually year-round, and by developing a reputation for quality, honesty and good service that makes people want to do business with you.

Remember last month's column on the buying cycle? Few people want to buy anything today. In other words, your advertising, promotion and public relations activities will seldom result in immediate sales. Your ads should attract attention and build conviction in the reader, with enough force and enough frequency to build top-of-mind awareness.

When you are host to a field day or a livestock judging contest, it is unlikely that anyone will want to buy a bull from you

that afternoon, or the next. The event should be designed to position you as a breeder of top-quality cattle and a good person with whom to do business.

Achieving top-of-mind awareness is a long-range goal. In fact, if you have been in business for awhile, you undoubtedly have developed it in at least a few customers. The trick is to expand it so that most of your sales result from it. Each year you want an increasing number of people to think of you first and favorably when they think about buying seedstock. You want to be known as "Mr. Angus" by a growing number of cattle producers in your market area, even those who don't use your breed of cattle now — even those who are not in the cattle business.

It's worth a lot more than many of us realize to be thought of first and favorably by a large number of your past and potential customers. People who come to you first to look for cattle are partially pre-sold. You have less to prove to them. Until proven wrong, they are likely to accept your word at face value, to feel that your prices are fair and to assume that if there is a problem you will stand behind your cattle 100%. They are more likely to tell others where they bought their cattle and to recommend you as a quality seedstock source.

It is important to have advertising and promotion going on at the time when you actually have cattle for sale, but it is also important to understand the buying cycle and top-of-mind awareness. When you do, you will look at marketing in a different way. You will begin to see that advertising and promotion is a cumulative process. Your reputation as a breeder and a marketer is built one small building block at a time.

Design each block to help you achieve top-of-mind awareness.

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