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APR 11 1963

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Guidelines for YOUR NEXT PRODUCT PROMOTION

Promotion of products is, in a sense, an accepted part of business. Many dollars may be spent promoting first this fertilizer, then that one. Yet, in another sense, product promotion is a highly controversial subject, say two Purdue University agricultural economists, Dr. R. B. Wilson and Dr. Charles E. French.

The controversy is usually over conditions necessary for a successful promotion. A set of conditions that may work successfully for one promotion may not work for another. Drs. Wilson and French believe that there is no magic formula but there are guidelines which may help prevent hit-and-miss situations and are generally present in successful promotions. Here are eight guidelines:

1. Emphasize the difference in your product. This may be done through a different package, better service, better quality, or other ways, but the important thing is to be different. The difference can be real or fancied; it is better and usually long-lived if it is real. Attention goes to the merchant who does it differently.
2. Sell a dependable quality product. You don't always need the best quality product, but it should be consistent with claims and of reasonably good quality. Customers who find quality to be below that claimed for the product are not likely to come back. Your customers want to buy with confidence in consistent and dependable quality; only this gives repeat sales.
3. Be sure of adequate volume. Nothing is worse for your business than creating a demand and then not being able to serve it.
4. Maintain a reasonably competitive price. Price is important. For example, a recent study showed it was one of the major factors considered by buyers for 96 supermarkets in selecting their sources of supply for eggs, broilers, watermelons and peaches. Your price doesn't have to be the lowest and the importance of price varies with the product. But price must be reasonable.
5. Pick a product with an increasing demand. It's usually easier to promote a product which is enjoying an increasing demand trend rather than one with an adverse trend. With sales expanding there is an opportunity to strive for part of an increasing total. It's a good promotion point to be able to show sales or to have an increasing number of people say, "Yes, I have just tried that, too."
6. Look for strong hidden qualities in the product. Many products have such characteristics; ferret them out and let them do the selling job for you.
7. Ride an emotional buying motive. Don't fight the emotions; use them. A strong emotional appeal is probably the best promotion theme possible. Increased production claims appeal to farmers.
8. Put together an adequate budget. Not all promotions need a large budget, but all need some. It is easy to be penny wise and pound foolish in promotion. Push your pencil on what is really needed to see the promotion completely through. Be sure you are willing to pay the price. Unfortunately, budget is part of the deal.

There is no simple success story in promotion. The above guidelines do not spell out a foolproof recipe. But try your product against these next time and your odds for success will be increased.