

The Most Bang for Your Banner

Following a few simple tips can help your banner advertisement stand out from the rest.

by **Christy Couch Lee**

Visit any Web site, and you are sure to see them. Banner advertisements have become the latest way farms and ranches are attracting new customers to their Web sites and generating new business.

So, what is involved in creating an effective banner ad? And, how is a person to begin?

Really, it's simple. By keeping a few key guidelines in mind, you can make your banner ad shine.

Seeing the benefits

Dale Venhuizen, Manhattan, Mont., has been experiencing the benefits of banner ads for several years. Involved in the Hereford business his entire life, he and his wife, Nancy, began Churchill Cattle Co. after they were married more than 20 years ago.

Today they, along with their four daughters — Kate, Anne, Megan and Camille — manage a Hereford cow herd producing 200 calves yearly.

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— Dale Venhuizen



Active in the Hereford industry, Venhuizen served on the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board of Directors from 2000-2004.

During his term on the board, Venhuizen suggested banner ads as a useful tool for AHA members. Once they became available on the AHA site, Venhuizen jumped on board. For him, the choice was simple.

“I, for one, am a heavy user of the AHA Web site,” Venhuizen says. “Being a performance-based herd, it's where I go, not only to do work but to check on pedigrees of my cattle and prospective cattle purchases. I think it would work well for Hereford breeders to advertise with banner ads on the AHA site because the visibility is so good.”

Tonya Orr-Perez also touts the benefits of banner advertisements. Raised on the Hereford operation begun by her great grandfather in the early 1920s, Orr-Perez attended Colorado State University and earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural business. After graduation she began working for AgTown Technologies, a Web development and marketing company focused on helping

farmers and ranchers effectively market themselves.

When she married Kyle Perez of C&M Herefords, nearly two years ago, they made their home on the ranch at Nara Visa, N.M., and she ventured back into the Hereford business full force. C&M Herefords sells Hereford seedstock and manages about 500 cows, with a purebred Hereford and Angus base.

Why banner ads?

Venhuizen says the primary goal of his banner advertisements is to create awareness for his operation — not to tell everything about his operation in one small box.

“Our goal is top-of-mind awareness,” he says. “The ultimate goal is to drive customers to our Web site, and to drive sales.”

Orr-Perez has been assisting cattlemen with creating banner advertisements for years. She also takes primary responsibility for C&M's banner advertisements.

“Usually when we run a banner ad, it's for a private-treaty sale or to promote an individual animal,” Orr-Perez says. “We utilize the Hereford



Web site because of its traffic. Banner advertising is a quick, convenient and cheap way to get the word out there, especially on high traffic sites.”

Not a technology guru? No problem. Breeders who aren't up to speed on the cyberworld can still take advantage of the marketing benefits of banner ads, Venhuizen says.

“I'm certainly no computer whiz,” he says. “In 2010, if you're not comfortable with a computer, you may have someone who is well-versed in it. My experience is that we have to market to the young generation — even though they may not be the ones with the checkbook. What they learn can transfer to the person in their family without the computer skills.”

Regardless of whether you're new to banner advertising or you're a pro, a few simple guidelines can help your ad be its best.

Banner ad basics

①— Be a tease

Offer just enough information to cause potential customers to click your ad and visit your Web site.

“Don't try to say too much — you're just trying to make a good first impression,” Venhuizen says. “You're not trying to make a sale. You're trying to get a potential customer's attention.”

Once you've gotten his attention, your potential customer can then click on your ad to visit your Web site for the full story, Orr-Perez says.

“Simply tell them what you're offering and when it's being offered, and then get them off to your Web site,” she says. “That's where you can tell the whole story. You can't do it in a little square box.”

②— Keep it short and sweet

As tempting as it may be, Orr-Perez says, avoid trying to put too much information into your banner ad.

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Sara Faber, AHA marketing and national shows coordinator, says she recommends only one or two photos in a rotating banner advertisement.

“Most people don't spend long amounts of time on one Web page; therefore, if you use too many photos, not all will be seen,” she says. “The ad will only rotate through the first few photos before the potential customer navigates to another page.”

Faber says it's best to include only the critical information — sale information, contact information and a logo, plus one photo of a champion or featured lot.

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AHA offers the package deal

The American Hereford Association (AHA) recently introduced banner ad packages, combining banner advertisements on the AHA Web site with advertisements in *Hereford World*.

Sara Faber, AHA marketing and national shows coordinator, says these packages were created in response to requests from AHA members.

“While some breeders are just interested in purchasing a banner ad as a way to advertise, many other breeders often choose to advertise in the *Hereford World* or have AHA Creative Services design a sale catalog for their sale or event,” Faber says. “These packages give them an option to combine their print advertising with their online advertising, which is a great value.”

These banner ads can be linked directly to the advertiser's Web site or to an online sale catalog.

When the AHA staff creates a banner advertisement for a breeder, the advertisement is created as a square and rectangle for use on the AHA Web site and in electronic newsletters. Advertisements located on the AHA Web site rotate throughout the site and are visible on all popular pages, Faber says.

Each banner advertisement can be created with a maximum of two frames. Up to two additional frames can be added for \$50 each.

All information for banner advertisements — including information and photos — should be submitted to the AHA staff at least one week prior to the anticipated start date, Faber says.

Pricing options include:

- 1-month with 4 *eNews* or *Sales Digest* ads – \$500
- 2-month with 4 *eNews* or *Sales Digest* ads – \$900
- 1 year with 20 *eNews* or *Sales Digest* ads – \$1,500
- HPI Contract — 4 one-page *Hereford World* ads (4-color) and a one-year banner ad on the AHA Web site – \$5,500
- Creative Service Contract — catalog, one-month banner ad on AHA Web site and 4 *eNews* or *Sales Digest* ads – Catalog bid price + \$400

For more information, visit Hereford.org/mediakit or contact Faber at sfaber@hereford.org or 816-842-3757. **HW**

“The goal of the banner ad is to entice people to ‘click through’ for more information,” Faber says. “Once people click through to a Web site or catalog, they can then view the full details and all of the offerings.”

In addition to losing potential customers’ interest, too much information in a banner ad affects readability, Faber says. Fonts are required to be smaller — thus making them difficult to read and less likely to catch potential customers’ attention.

③— One message at a time —
Orr-Perez says it’s important to address only one message in one banner advertisement.

For example, C&M purchased banner advertising space on the AHA Web site in January and wished to use the space to promote its National Western Stock Show (NWSS) and Fort Worth Stock Show sale offerings, Orr-Perez says.

Rather than trying to address both topics in one ad, C&M created two ads for the space — one to run before the NWSS and one to run after NWSS and before Fort Worth.

④— Location, location, location —
If given the choice, Orr-Perez says, ask for a prime Web site location for your banner advertisement.

“Location is just like ad placement — the back cover or inside front cover of a magazine are where you want to be, because they’re seen the most,” she says. “The same is true for banner ads. Some pages aren’t viewed as much as others. You want to be sure you’re on a page that gets a lot of traffic.”

⑤— Bigger is better —
Orr-Perez recommends purchasing a larger banner ad, if location is not a choice.

“The bigger banner ads have more space — more real estate — thus, giving you the opportunity to more likely get noticed,” she says.

“If you see more hits when you run a banner ad, it’s a good sign your banner ad is effective.”

— Tonya Orr-Perez

⑥— Know your competition —
Will your ad be in rotation with other banner ads? If so, how many?

“The fewer banner ads they have, the more exposure you’re going to have,” Orr-Perez says. “If they have 10 banner ads in rotation, you may only be seen by every 10th person. How many others will your ad be competing with?”

⑦— Plan ahead —
The use of your banner ad will determine the timing of placement, Orr-Perez says.

If the banner ad is promoting a sale, it’s best to have it live on the site at least a month before the sale to allow time to gather contact information for potential customers and mail them a catalog.

Also, don’t forget creation time. Check with your ad creators to determine the deadline for materials to be submitted to them, in order for the ad to be created in time to go live by your desired date.

⑧— Get the traffic report —
When shopping for the best Web site for your banner advertisement, Orr-Perez says, ask for the average number of hits — or views — on the Web site.

For example, during the months of December and January, banner ads on AHA’s Web site were viewed 217,741 times and were clicked on 2,603 times.

“In this industry, almost everyone is charging by the month,” Orr-Perez says. “The higher the traffic, the more it’s going to cost because you’re going to be seen more.”

⑨— Let them know who you are —
Sometimes a banner ad promoting an upcoming production or private-treaty sale is needed. However, sometimes an ad simply promoting your operation is the best choice, Orr-Perez says.

“It keeps people coming back to your Web site and keeps them interested in what you’re doing,” she says. “It’s important to get out there and market your operation. If you’re not out there marketing it, no one else is.”

⑩— Keep it current —
Even if you’ve paid for a full month of advertising on a Web site, change your ad or remove it if the sale date has passed, Orr-Perez says.

“If you still have three weeks left in what you’ve paid for, change out the ad and promote a herd sire or donor,” she says. “But, if the ad is out of date, potential customers assume that because you’ve lagged on updating your banner ad, you’ve lagged on updating your Web site, too. So, why go there?”

⑪— Track your hits —
The best way to determine if your banner ad is successful is to track the number of hits to your Web site, Orr-Perez says.

“With C&M, they notice their Web site traffic spike when they run a banner ad,” Orr-Perez says. “If you see more hits when you run a banner ad, it’s a good sign your banner ad is effective.”

⑫— Get the facts —
Don’t be afraid to ask questions of experts in the agricultural advertising industry, Orr-Perez says.

“They not only know the agricultural industry but also the technical aspects,” she says. “It’s important to find someone who can speak your language with the cattle and know what should be used for your marketing.” **HW**