

DROUGHTMASTER MARKETING

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Volume 4

4. Programming

Suppose your physician tells you that for the sake of your health you must lose weight and get in shape. Taking that advice to heart, you skip lunch and have a rice cake and lettuce leaf for dinner. That evening you do push-ups and sit-ups then put on jogging shoes and run until you nearly drop. You can barely drag yourself home and onto the sofa. Now, are you in shape? The answer is obvious. You are dog tired, sore and hungry. The prospect of going through this experience sometime soon has no appeal but you certainly aren't in shape. To get fit and lose weight you must develop an exercise and eating programme that matches your ability, your needs and your goals. Then you must follow it day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year. Stop the programme and its positive effects are soon reversed.

Marketing works the same way. I have known people who get excited about marketing and start out with a bang. They make a big one-time outlay of funds for advertising and promotion, then assume the job is done. When little if anything happens they feel discouraged and cheated, just as the person who overdoes his diet and exercise the first day. Virtually nothing is accomplished.

Your marketing programme, just as your exercise programme, must be sustainable. Sustainable not for a few weeks or even a few months but indefinitely. You must review and revise the programme at the end of every marketing year. But the programme must continue on as long as you are in business.

Classic proof of the value of an advertising programme was demonstrated by research done a few years ago by the U.S. Association of Business Publishers. They took two good products used by businesses that hadn't received proper marketing support. Solid advertising programmes were developed for both and put in place. They were also prepared to track sales records. Nearly four months went by and virtually nothing happened. Then sales began to climb. They reached new, more profitable heights and levelled off. The researchers then increased the frequency and the size of the ads and sales climbed again, before levelling off. Colour was added to the advertising and over a period of time sales went even higher. Nothing had changed in the two businesses except the advertising programme. Finally researchers dropped advertising back to pre-test levels. For four months sales of both products remained high, then purchases of the \$10 item began to decline. It took six months before sales for the \$10,000 item began to drop. Eventually sales for both declined to pre-test levels.

You can't fly an aeroplane off the ground without starting its engines and revving them up to effective power level. Furthermore, you will come quickly back to earth if you shut those engines off once you reach cruising altitude. The same goes for your bull sales. A well-planned marketing programme gets things moving and keeps business running smoothly. You may need to apply more marketing power to improve business or meet the competition, but don't plan to shut down the programme until you are ready to shut down your business.

