

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Conducted By Paul C. Olsen.*

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ARE INVITED AND WELCOME.

Readers are invited to submit comments, criticisms and suggestions regarding the material which appears in this department. The Editor also will undertake to answer questions regarding general problems of business management. Letters of general interest will be published, but the writer's name will not be revealed without his permission.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EFFECTIVE DISPLAY.

(Continued from March JOURNAL.)

The most effective and inexpensive means of advertising for many retail stores are display windows, and the space inside the store. The same principles which are effective in attracting and holding attention for window displays can be applied successfully to interior displays.

As contrasted with the interior display, the window display has the added task of drawing people into the store after it has attracted and held their attention. On the other hand, however, the window display is seen by many more people than the displays inside the store. It often happens in many locations that ten or a hundred times as many people pass a store as enter it.

In the physical construction of displays themselves, whether they are inside the store or in the window, there are some general psychological principles which always should be taken into account.

Don't be frightened by the word psychology. Psychology, in every-day terms, is simply a study of the way people act and the mental and physical causes which initiate these actions. As one popular author has said, psychology is a study of why we behave like human beings!

What I have tried to do in the preceding articles in this series is to enumerate generally known psychological principles and explain how their use can cause a display to attract and hold maximum attention. That is to say, the more we know about the causes which will make people stop and look at a display the more productive and profitable that display which properly employs these psychological principles can be made to be. The more attention a display attracts and holds, the more opportunities it has, quite naturally, to make sales.

Similarly, in the physical construction of window and store displays, the effective use of psychological principles can make these displays have the greatest possible selling power.

The first of these principles is balance. A display should not be top-heavy, nor should it be lopsided. Why? We unconsciously appreciate that which is balanced. It is restful and harmonious. Unbalanced displays create impressions which are disturbing and inharmonious and therefore unpleasant.

* Instructor of Merchandising, Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania, Lecturer on Business Administration, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

Lateral (horizontal) balance is achieved by the arrangement of the objects in the display in such a manner that the physical bulk of the objects on either side of the middle of the display appears to the eye to be equal. This does not mean necessarily that the objects in the display have to be all of equal bulk or height. On the contrary, such a display is likely to appear so monotonous and uninteresting that it will attract and hold little attention. Horizontal balance very well may be in the form of an upward or a downward swinging arc, with the lowest or highest point in the middle of the display.

In the case of an upward swinging arc this effect is obtained, of course, by having the smallest objects in the display at its outer edges and with other objects gradually increasing in size until the largest ones are in the middle.

In the downward arc, the largest objects are at the outer edges, gradually decreasing in size until the smallest are in the middle.

But what if all the objects to be displayed are of the same size? Anyone is familiar with the pyramids of canned goods which are to be seen in almost any well-managed grocery store. Although all the cans are of exactly the same size, the upward arc effect is obtained by piling the cans on top of each other in pyramid form.

It is necessary to be careful, in the construction of such displays inside of a store that they are not so intricate as to block or hinder sales. Time and again people have refused to help themselves to merchandise arranged in an intricate but balanced design, for fear of destroying its symmetry. Then, too, some customers are afraid to touch such displays for fear their removal of a package or two will cause the whole display to come tumbling down, with embarrassment to themselves and annoyance to the store's salespeople.

Displays are only a means to an end and that end is sales. Therefore, they should be so constructed that merchandise as it is sold can be removed readily and the symmetry and balance of the display restored easily. (Needless to say, this is more important in store displays than it is in window displays.)

Vertical balance means simply that the display should not be top-heavy. Its base should be wider than its peak. Generally speaking, a display should not be more than two-thirds or three-quarters as high as its greatest width.

Articles displayed more than six feet above the level of the store floor or sidewalk are not seen by most people. The reason is that it is uncomfortable to look upward. Objects at or below the eye level can be seen and studied without much physical effort. In other words, a display more than six feet high, no matter how attractive it may be, is under a distinct handicap because of the special effort required to see it.

That is one of the handicaps of sky writing as an advertising medium. An unnatural and rather painful physical effort is required to see it.

The lower limit of effective display space is about ten inches or one foot above the store floor or sidewalk level. Everyone doesn't have perfect eye sight and, even for those who do, it is a distinct effort to see and be impressed by merchandise too far below the eye level. This is especially true in drug stores because a large part of the merchandise displayed is small in size. In jewelry stores, which have the same problem to even a greater degree, the issue is met by raising the level of window and show-case displays to a height of thirty to thirty-six inches above the floor.

Just as the effective display space in a store or in a window is limited to a maximum height of about six feet above the floor or sidewalk and a lower limit of ten inches to a foot above the floor or sidewalk, so is the depth that a display can have limited. Naturally, this depth varies with the size of the articles which are displayed. Merchandise which is small in size can be displayed effectively only in arrangements of shallow depth.

In windows or other display spaces which are deep, the smallest articles should be placed nearest the front and those of larger size arranged behind them in ascending order of size. Thus each article gets display space which is effective for it. It is easy to see how the selling possibilities of a display would be destroyed if the larger articles were placed in front of the smaller ones.

Every display should have incorporated in it some eye arresting attention-getter. It may be a bright spot of color, a price tag, a sign, or some one object which stands out from the rest of the display. This is what is called the focal point of the display. It serves the same purpose as headlines or pictures in a newspaper. The eye is caught by this focal point and interested; then the study of the remainder of the display begins. The creation of a focal point in a display is the second psychological principle which should be made use of in the physical construction of a display. Without it the display is as dull and lifeless as a page of fine print.

Once the focal point or high spot has caught the eye, the hope is that the display will prove so interesting that at least a part of those so attracted will look at it until they have seen the whole display.

Here, too, it is well to take advantage of a third well-known psychological principle. In reading the eye moves from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Any other movement is unnatural and therefore difficult. A display which is so arranged that its various elements may be seen in a left to right, top to bottom order takes advantage of this principle and thus helps itself to gain and hold interested attention.

The psychological principles which can be used to make window displays more productive and profitable now may be summarized as follows:

1. Attention getting principles.
 - a. Mechanical.
 - b. Inherent in the merchandise displayed.
2. Attention holding principles.
 - a. Mechanical.
 - b. Inherent in the merchandise displayed.
3. Psychological principles in the physical construction of displays.

The third of these three general groups is discussed in this article. The preceding two I undertook to explain in preceding articles of this series.

NEW MEXICO STATE BOARD OF PHARMACY MEETING.

The next regular meeting of the New Mexico State Board of Pharmacy will be held in the Franciscan Hotel at Albuquerque, N. M., May 21, 1928.

Examinations of candidates for registration and other regular business will be carried on.

All requests for information should be sent to the Secretary, David L. C. Hover, Cloudcroft, New Mexico.