

# 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 will also 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.

## ADVERTISING AND SELLING PROBLEMS OF DRUG STORES.

### HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LETTERS.

BY PAUL C. OLSEN.

Every letter written or received by a retail druggist is really a sales letter. When a druggist writes a letter, he writes it, or he should write it, with the purpose in mind of impressing a definite feeling or action upon the person who receives the letter.

In just the degree to which a letter is successful in doing this, the sender is successful as a letter writer.

Business letters are written by pharmacists for the following purposes:

1. To sell goods and services.
2. To make an inquiry.
3. To reply to an inquiry.
4. To give instructions.
5. To order goods.
6. To make acknowledgment.
7. To ask for credit.
8. To collect bills.
9. To adjust complaints.
10. To make introductions, endorsements and recommendations.
11. To apply for a position.

Because a pharmacist is likely to have to write letters of these various kinds throughout his career, it is of the utmost importance and profit to him that he should understand and be able to apply the factors which obtained for business letters maximum effectiveness.

These factors which obtain maximum effectiveness for business letters are four in number.

The first is, *appearance and form*. A letter which is not physically attractive is unnecessarily handicapped. Letters should have an appearance appropriate to their message. It is not necessary for a letter calling the attention of backyard gardeners to a drug store's stock of seeds to be written on stationery suitable for announcing social functions. Contrarily, a letter intended to attract more stationery sales to a drug store should not be smearnily mineographed on a sleazy sheet of paper.

*Time* is the second factor affecting the success of business letters. A letter should reach its reader, when possible or determinable, at a time when the letter can get and hold the reader's maximum attention. Full advantage should be taken

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of environmental and competing influences to do this. It is wasteful to send letters in July about school supplies to parents of children of school age.

Time is a factor, however, which is decidedly individual in its force. Who would believe, for instance, that a druggist could sell Christmas cards by letter to his customers a few days after Christmas? There are druggists who do this year after year, incidentally disposing of left-over stock which they otherwise would have to carry until the following Christmas season. The money thus received from these extra after Christmas sales is thus available for the purchase and sale through the winter months of additional medicines and pharmaceutical necessities which are in greatest demand at that time of the year. The plan is logical. Greeting card manufacturers themselves send their own salesmen out to drug stores in January, selling Christmas cards for the following season and do so successfully because the memory of the preceding seasons' business is still fresh in the minds of their retail distributors.

The *English* used in letters written by retail druggists is a third factor influencing the effectiveness of these letters. Business letters should be written in a style which will convey the message to the reader most readily and effectively. This means that a business letter should be written simply, directly and clearly, and in a style not calculated to attract attention to itself to the detraction of the attention given to the message.

The comment, "Isn't this a clever letter I had from Galen's drug store this morning?"—is really a severe indictment of the effectiveness of that letter, although the recipient of course doesn't intend his comment to be taken that way. The message is the important thing about a letter, not the form in which it is conveyed. If the English and the form of a business letter are so unusual as to attract attention to themselves, there is just that much less likelihood of the message being understood and acted upon.

The words and expressions used in an effective business letter should be those which will be most readily understood and appreciated by the particular readers addressed. Oriental pidgin English may be uproariously entertaining to some people but it rarely helps readers to understand and act upon the message expressed in letters written in this style. The wording of a business letter should be a help and not a hindrance to the understanding of the message of the letter.

Fourth and most fundamental factor of all in the success of a business letter is the *message* itself. A business letter may be attractive in appearance and form, arrive at an appropriate time and be phrased in excellent English; yet if it conveys no message which arouses interest and a desire to respond, the letter is useless.

The ideas and thoughts in a business letter should be related to the experience and interests of the person addressed. Manufacturers and wholesalers when writing letters to retail druggists try to talk the language of retail pharmacy because they know that this will impress retail druggists with their familiarity with his situation and problems. When a retail druggist writes letters to the physicians practicing near him, he tries to talk the language of the physician so that the physician will be impressed with the pharmacist's understanding of the problems of his practice. Then the physician is more likely to call upon the pharmacist for professional services.

In writing to lay customers, the variety of their interests and environments

sometimes prohibits a message intimately associated with their individual problems. It is possible, of course, to write special letters to parents of young children, calling attention to the drug store's ability to serve them. When general letters are written the likelihood of their producing interest and a profitable response can be increased by appeals based upon local customs, traditions and habits and, more generally, upon the instincts and the emotions.

In many of the southern states, spring house cleaning begins traditionally the first week in April. Therefore, a druggist in the south who sends to the housewives in the vicinity of his store letters about house-cleaning aids in his stock the last week in March can be almost sure that a large proportion of the housewives who receive this letter will be interested in its subject matter. Special selling efforts at Easter time, Mother's Day and now in June, Father's Day, school opening, fall house cleaning, Hallowe'en, Thanksgiving and Christmas all rest upon the same fundamental basis.

Appeals in drug store sales letters to instincts are likely to be effective because instincts are an inherited and universal tendency people have to respond to similarly under similar conditions. No one knows yet how many instincts there are. The following list, however, enumerates some of the instincts toward which appeals in sales letters are commonly and effectively directed:

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Appetite                        | 9. Sociability          |
| 2. Bargain (something for nothing) | 10. Competition         |
| 3. Comfort                         | 11. Curiosity           |
| 4. Family                          | 12. Ornamentation       |
| 5. Play                            | 13. Cleanliness         |
| 6. Self preservation               | 14. Imitation           |
| 7. Acquisitiveness                 | 15. Construction        |
| 8. Hunting                         | 16. Harmony and beauty. |

As is the case with instincts, psychologists do not yet know all of the characteristics of emotions. Emotions are mental states which may accompany instinctive actions or they may occur independently of them. Their importance as bases of appeal in sales letters is their inherited and universal occurrence in all people.

Emotions which occur frequently independently of instinctive action are the following: Joy, Sorrow, Sympathy, Humor and Restlessness.

Modification of instincts and emotions is believed now by psychologists to occur almost from birth. Civilization curbs the acquisitive instinct we all have; imperfectly, though, in many instances, otherwise there would be no need for police departments. Environmental modification of instincts naturally reduces the likelihood of response to appeals to these instincts. None the less, instinctive appeals can be tremendously effective. Given no knowledge at all about the individual tastes and inclinations of a person to whom a sales letter is to be addressed, isn't it more likely that a sales letter based upon an instinctive or emotional appeal will be more likely to be effective than one which is based upon an appeal which may not be within the experience or interest of the person addressed?

In sales letters, suggestions combined with a subordinate justification are the most effective bases for an appeal designed to secure immediate response. People do not like to think that in responding to a sales letter, they acted impulsively. Therefore, the wise sales letter writer also includes in his message, in addition to the

instinctive or emotional appeal subordinate reasons which, when the reader reflects upon his response, will provide him with a justification for that response.

Specifically, an appeal to a young mother in a sales letter to buy at a drug store strained vegetables for her infant may be based primarily upon the family love instinct. The letter should include in addition, however, a justification for the purchase, "Baby's health will be cared for. Care in infancy prevents many later ills."

Logical reasoning in sales letters is useful when action can be secured only after careful consideration. Generally it involves a choice of alternatives. Consider the problems involved in writing an effective letter which will convince a dispensing physician that he will serve his practice best and profit most if he writes prescriptions to be individually compounded by retail pharmacists rather than that he dispenses prepared medicines from his office.

Experienced druggists will see immediately in this and other like situations that logical reasoning should not be carried to the extreme of argument. Even when an argument is won, the reader of an argumentative sales letter feels that he has been forced unwillingly to an unwelcome conclusion. His attitude is one of grudging and crestfallen consent when it should be one of enthusiastic approval. The aim of every business letter should be to arouse a willing response.

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## BELLADONNA MONOGRAPHS.

BY FREDERICK B. KILMER.

(Continued from page 375, April number, *Jour. A. Ph. A.*)

DARIES' THESIS: "ATROPA BELLADONNA."

A notable landmark in the monographs devoted to Belladonna is one written by a Hamburg drug clerk, Peter John Andrew Daries, and published in 1776.

It was a graduation thesis submitted at the University of Leipzig, where he attained the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

This pamphlet monograph contains forty pages, and carries no illustrations. Not many copies are extant, and it is not generally referred to in the literature of the drug. The title page runs as follows:

"Concerning Atropa Belladonna  
By The Authority Of The Most Gracious Order of Physicians  
Under The Direction Of  
Master Anthony William Plaz  
Primarius Of Therapeutics, Dean Of The Medical  
Faculty, Senior Member Of The National Saxon  
Academy, Member Of The Board Of Gov-  
ernors, 'Greater Chief' Colleague Of  
The College, Member Of The Acad-  
emy Of Natural Curiosities.

The Author, Peter John Andrew Daries, Bachelor Of Medicine,  
Of Parchimo-Metropolitanus,  
Will Dispute For The Degree Of Doctor. On August 30, 1776."