

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.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL DRUG STORE SALESMEN.

BY PAUL C. OLSEN.

Imagination is the characteristic which enables a person to visualize that which is not before him and which indeed may never have been before him. It is a characteristic which is exceedingly important to successful drug store salesmen. The drug journals each month contain many instances which show how true this is. Just one group of examples are the facsimile reproductions of queer and odd orders which have been correctly interpreted and properly filled by drug store salesmen.

Imagination, as well as professional knowledge, is required of a drug store salesman when he is asked by a customer for insecticide which will kill roaches. Sodium fluoride is such an insecticide but it is also a poison to human beings. Where there are young children in the house, especially creeping babies, imagination as well as knowledge is required of the drug store salesman who is asked to supply an insecticide to be used under these conditions.

For disinfecting bathroom fixtures a dilution of an antiseptic containing phenol is probably the most effective and the least costly. For oral use, an entirely different type of antiseptic is indicated. Imagination plus knowledge equips able drug store salesmen with the ability to determine when to sell which.

Probably most common of all the experiences which drug store salesmen have in the sale of poisons occurs when a person, usually nervous, asks for a lethal dose of a poison "to kill a cat." Those are the occasions when the knowledge, imagination and human understanding of pharmacists everywhere have prevented murders and suicides—achievements which are to the everlasting credit of the pharmaceutical profession.

Imagination is a useful characteristic of a drug store salesman under many more pleasant conditions. It helps him to assist a love-sick young man in making a selection of the perfume or toilet water which will be most likely to please the young lady of his affections.

Imagination plus knowledge enables the drug store salesman with these characteristics to make a sale of C.P. instead of ordinary sodium chloride to the amateur chemist with a laboratory in his cellar and, at the same time, to win the good-will and enthusiastic interest of such a chemical experimenter by the knowledge and interest shown in his work.

* Lecturer on Business, Columbia University and Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

In the other direction, the tactful but imaginative drug store salesman asks the purchaser of C.P. epsom salts the purpose for which they are to be used. If for a "reducing bath," he tells the customer that commercial epsom salt will serve the purpose as well and at much lower cost. The immediate sale is small but the good-will gained is invaluable. Drug store successes are built upon a long continued series of sales to satisfied customers. One of the easiest ways to keep customers satisfied is to show them safely how to save money.

A characteristic which is closely associated with imagination in successful drug store salesmen is memory. Every experienced druggist can recall encounters with narcotic addicts in which imagination and memory proved themselves invaluable.

Customers are always flattered in a retail store when they are called by name. Memory is the ability to recall that which has previously happened or been experienced. It differs from imagination in that imagination is the ability to call to mind something which not only is not present but may never have been present or experienced. Memory reminds the drug store salesman to ask a customer if she had a pleasant vacation or if a party she had planned had proved to be a success.

A good memory in a drug store salesman is a characteristic which is much appreciated not only by customers but by other people working in the store. It helps to find quickly items which are rarely called for and which are on hand in minimum quantities. It helps to recall whether or not items previously out of stock have been ordered and received and where they have been placed.

There is a danger in depending too much upon memory in the operation of a drug store. It may be a source of pride to a drug store salesman that he never fails to remember to send to a customer every Monday morning the bottle of spring water for which she has a standing order. It is a whole lot better, though, to note this order on a calendar or diary so that it automatically comes to the attention of the people in the store every Monday morning. Some Monday the salesman with the "perfect" memory may be out sick and the customer may not get her spring water.

It is all very well to attempt to carry in one's head the items to be ordered the next time an order is to be given to a wholesale druggist, but the wise thing to do is to write these items in a want book and then to depend on the want book instead of one's memory.

If a person attempts to memorize too much, he has little place left for original creative thinking and for the planning of new and constructive activities. Memory is history. Historians record what has happened. The great progress of the world has not been made by these recorders of what has happened, but rather by the original and creative thinkers whose constructive advances made history worthy of being recorded. What is true of the world in general applies with equal force to the specialized problems involved in successful drug store operation.

Enthusiasm is to an individual what carbonic acid gas is to a sparkling mineral water. It is the characteristic which gives to an individual life and color. The reason that enthusiasm is so important as a characteristic in a salesperson is that it is contagious. A sincerely enthusiastic person can create that enthusiasm in the people to whom he talks. The enthusiastic drug store salesman by the very ardor of his presentation may awaken or create that ardor in his customer, with the result that the customer deems it a privilege to buy from him a motion picture

camera and projector and accompanying supplies, with profit to himself, and the salesman.

Enthusiasm is the characteristic which causes a drug store salesman to approach his duties each day with interest and zest and not merely to regard them as a boresome interlude between breakfast and an after dinner tennis game or a visit to a motion picture palace.

Earnestness is a characteristic which is strikingly like, but basically different from enthusiasm. The basic difference arises from the different source from which the two characteristics are generated. Earnestness is of the mind and enthusiasm is of the heart. Both imply sincere and honest conviction. Earnestness results from conviction following logical reasoning. Enthusiasm results from conviction following instinctive or emotional reactions of combinations of the two. It is basically intuitive, while earnestness is basically logical.

People can be swayed to action by instinctive and emotional appeals. The danger in obtaining responses by this method is that, if these responses do not have a sound and logical basis, even though arrived at by no logical process of reasoning, the person is very likely later—when their influence has waned—to regret his decision and to feel resentment toward the person whose enthusiasm led him to make the decision and consequent purchase. In the case of a purchase of an item in a drug store, this means that the resentment is likely to be felt toward the drug store salesperson and, to even a greater degree, toward the store in which the sale is made.

This is why earnestness should temper the salesman's presentation. Although earnestness is a selling force somewhat less powerful in producing responses than is enthusiasm, it proceeds from a basis which can be subjected to logical and leisured reasoning. Responses are produced most readily in selling by an enthusiastic presentation. When earnestness in the presentation is also employed, earnestness provides the justification for the purchase after the overwhelming but temporary influence of the salesman's enthusiasm has left the customer.

THE FLORIDA SPONGE INDUSTRY.*

BY F. H. HEATH AND P. A. FOOTE.

What is a sponge? A sponge is the cleaned skeleton of a creature that lives attached to the sea bottom. The original name in Greek was *Zoofiton*, meaning half plant and half animal, from the doubt as to which classification it really belongs. About sixty years ago it was definitely established that the sponge belongs to the *Porifera* branch of the animal kingdom. The fresh sponge carries a "skin" over it and inside its pores it is filled with a brown slimy material called "gurry." A microscopic examination reveals that the living substance is composed of protoplasmic cells which in all groups, except glass sponges, surround and penetrate a clear glutinous semifluid intercellular jelly. If brought out of water, even for a short time, the sponge will die.

The sponge reproduces itself by throwing off spores which float about until they attach themselves to some hard substance, such as rock. Sponges may be

* Plant Science Seminar, Miami meeting, 1931.