

REPETITION MAKES REPUTATION.*

BY W. W. FIGGIS.

I submit that the constant *repetition* of any fixed course of procedure establishes a *reputation* which is calculated either to inspire confidence or create suspicion.

The continued repetition of a short-sighted policy earns a reputation which is inimical to business building, until the very atmosphere of one's store is permeated with that indefinable something, which repels rather than draws trade.

The man of broad vision, who works on the basis that "A pound of taffy is worth a ton of epitaph(y)," and meets his customers, also trains his clerks to approach prospective buyers, with that genial smile which betokens an honest, good-natured disposition, always wins and holds trade.

I stated last year in a "paper" before this Association, that "satisfied customers are a permanent asset," and now I would add, that they also constitute a continuous advertisement, and this constant repetition has a reflex influence constructively, in relation to the reputation of any store.

The reverse is also true, that dissatisfied customers are a permanent liability with a steadily increasing penalty, which works destructively, because people will talk of the treatment they receive, and it is impossible to nullify the cumulative effect of one's words when once spoken.

It is generally conceded that our mental attitude has everything to do with what we expect to accomplish, and when we consider the psychological fact, "As a man thinketh, so is he,"—and this being purely a mental operation, it must necessarily be a process of transformation rather than one of reformation.

Let us apply this principle to a changed policy which is obviously essential in the conduct of some store, to improve conditions, and increase sales and profits. The stereotyped custom in such a case, is usually the adoption of some new system of sales adjustment, which is a process of reformation, whereas the correct starting point, I claim, should be psychological, and the procedure one of transformation: in other words, from the "ego" of the individual, which is the source of his personality, and the origin of his thoughts, volitions and actions, and the seat of character.

To be more specific—we might as well be perfectly frank regarding this very important phase of the subject, because there is no gain in "patting one's self on the back," and placing the blame for a shrinkage in sales where it does not belong, when, as a matter of fact, the trouble may originate in the Proprietor himself, because his reputation is being impaired by the repetition of certain acts, due to some deterrent peculiarity of his disposition, of which he may not be aware, therefore over which he cannot exercise control.

This unfortunate trait may be perfectly apparent to others, and, under these circumstances, if he should criticise some clerk in his employ, such might justly reply, "What you are speaks so loud I cannot hear what you say."

It is axiomatic that we become like those with whom we are closely associated, and clerks therefore, even unconsciously, take the cue from their employers, because where the engine goes the cars usually follow; therefore we are confronted

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with a double reason, why the necessary remedy to improve conditions should be promptly applied.

I submit that the mode of procedure is, that the Proprietor should begin with himself, and by introspection, and a systematic process of self-examination, discover, that possibly an altered mental attitude, and a readjustment of his disposition is necessary to remove the hindering cause, to the perfect harmonizing of his personality with the individual peculiarities of his customers.

It is worthy of note in this connection that "Bradstreet's" recent report states, that "Four-fifths of all business failures result from tendencies present within the individual himself, and the remaining one-fifth is due to extraneous conditions, over which he has little or no control."

For this reason, it is very important to be fully convinced, that all reconstructive business policies should begin with a transformation of "self" as the starting point; secondly—with the clerks in our employ; and lastly, with whatever reformation may be thought necessary for the further successful conduct of the store.

Let us again approach this subject from another angle. It can be logically proven, that habit is the automatic working of memory—in other words, remembering to do something so often, that unconsciously the process lapses into a habit, and it follows as a reasonable conclusion, that if you are inclined to be a pessimist, and see only the "hole in the doughnut" to the exclusion of the complete article, this unfortunate mental attitude can be overcome, if you will continuously remember to cultivate a cheerful and contented disposition, which, by reason of repetition, unconsciously becomes a habit; and establishes a new reputation, because it has become part of the warp and woof of your personality.

We all know that a good-natured disposition, if sincere, is infectious as well as contagious—who of us has not felt the exhilarating uplift of such a personality, and endeavored to reproduce the type, and made a dismal failure of it, because we neglected to grasp the fact, that its Genesis was from within, as an active principle, and not a veneer, nor an assumed mannerism, but the spontaneous out-working of the inner self.

The rose and the onion both grow side by side in the same soil, and both draw from the same source of supply, but how different is the finished product, and we all have it within our power to extract from life's environment what constitutes the fundamental basis of our dispositions.

The repetition of a determination, to expect a silver lining to every cloud, establishes a reputation which enables us, the better to achieve life's objectives—as the song has it "What's the use of worrying, it never was worth while, so pack up your troubles in your kit-bag and smile, smile, smile." But we should not lose sight of the fact that excessive frivolity is to be deprecated as puerile and unbecoming in any man.

We are surrounded by innumerable illustrations of the fact that all true progress is a process of transformation. Is not evolution calling in clarion tones—"I work from within." Does not the surgeon, when necessary, insert a seton in a wound, in order to keep it open, and give nature time to begin her work of healing from the inside. Are not our physical bodies sustained by the building up of tissue on the inside, to compensate for the "sluffing off" process, which we are

told takes place on the outside; but I will not weary you with further illustrations, because the fact is self-evident.

Accepting what I have endeavored to prove as true that repetition makes reputation—transformation should precede reformation and that all true growth and progress should begin from the center and extend to the utmost periphery of one's sphere of influence. The next logical step is into the realm of "efficiency," with all that it suggests for scholarly attainment, and business acumen.

This word "Efficiency" has a magic charm for the red-blooded man who is fully alive to the possibilities of achieving larger successes than those already accomplished; and is a tonic for further effort along definite lines for larger attainment, realizing, that the "Mill will never grind with the waters that are passed," he is always on the alert for anything, and everything of practical value, which tends toward a healthy material growth, and enlarges his scope of possible endeavor.

Self complacency is the foe of progress, and a garrulous disposition the enemy of efficiency. We should learn to think twice before we speak once, because it has been well said that "A glib tongue often betokens a cracked brain," just as a smell of gas reveals a leak in the pipe.

To interject a little mirth into this paper, I am reminded of a story regarding "Efficiency." A youthful hopeful of some ten summers looked up into his father's face from a book he was reading and inquired,—“Papa, what is Efficiency?” “Why, my son, that word-means ‘doing or saying precisely the right thing at precisely the right time.’” “O!” exclaimed the young hopeful, “Then I was efficient last night when I rolled Johnny over into my place in the bed, just before Ma came in with the castor oil, and back again before she came to the other side of the bed.”

The spirit back of all effort reflects the results obtained. To such a man yesterday's best does not suffice for to-day, because anyone who rests on past achievements, sooner or later reaches the "Angle of repose," and becomes mentally inert and atrophied.

A wishbone can never be substituted for a backbone, and the man who can only cut prices in a last spasm to make sales, had better sell out and give another fellow a chance to demonstrate that the secret of success is having the correct viewpoint, and therefore he eliminates all fossil habits and puts into action aggressiveness mixed with caution, and optimism combined with horse-sense, plus that telescopic vision, which is measured by knowing an opportunity when it presents itself, and his ability to seize it before it is gone.

In conclusion, let me suggest that there never was a time when the opportunities for enlarged spheres of activity were more advantageous than now, the changing times, and the enforced differences of tastes, coupled with the consequent varying needs of the general public makes it opportune to put more "pep" into your business, and interject more individuality and originality into the conduct of your store, remembering the trite saying that "Wherever McGregor sits is the head of the table."
