

## RETAIL SALESMANSHIP.\*

BY TURNER F. CURRENS.

RETAIL SALESMANSHIP offers a great opportunity for *selling*. Customers approach the seller in a buying mood, looking for and inquiring about something they want to buy. In the majority of cases, retail salesmen are made "soft" by this very opportunity, and refuse to reach out for additional sales that can be made with comparative ease. This applies to proprietors, and managers, as well as clerks; in fact, the responsibility should be laid at the feet of the proprietor or manager, rather than the clerk. If traveling salesmen used the tactics of the majority of their customers, they would starve to death.

*Sales Training of the Chain Store vs. the Independent Store.*—It is an absolute fact that an independent drug store, with a strong personality behind it, has a great advantage over the chain store. The owners and managers of chain organizations are alive to their own shortcomings, and are combating the sales inertia of their clerks by having weekly sales meetings, lectures on merchandising and advertising, actual training classes, with occasional outside speakers, and manufacturers' representatives. So that it behooves the independent dealer to learn how to increase his sales by displaying his wares, and intelligently offering them to the buying-minded public while in his store.

An atmosphere of cheerfulness has a very direct effect on people's spending. Customers do not freely spend in a surrounding of gloom. Plus the cheerfulness with a thorough-going knowledge of what is offered. People buy from salesmen who know their business. Knowledge shown of an item offered, immediately begets the confidence of the prospect, and confidence always stimulates sales. Cheerfulness and interest in customers must be sustained to get the most satisfactory results.

*Remuneration.*—There is nothing deadlier to an employee than salary. Let an employee learn that he has reached his limit and he is immediately dissatisfied. Human beings must have incentive to do their best, and *money* is the greatest incentive yet discovered. Proprietors should carefully work out a just salary, all things considered and on top of that, run continual PMs. Keep running sales which everlastingly give the clerks a chance to make a little extra money, week after week. Such a plan sustains interest, and certainly increases sales. Where proprietors do selling themselves, they should draw down their own PM. The extra commission keeps the "old man" from getting sour and independent. Remember: There is nothing more killing to a man's ambition than salary, so always try to arrange for some extra remuneration.

## WAYS AND MEANS.

Proprietors will find many ideas and helps in selling by not living too close to their business. Get out and see what the other fellow is doing. Get acquainted with your nearby competitor. Often he is found to be a mighty good fellow, willing to cooperate for mutual benefit. Watch the advertising leads of the big department stores.

"No trouble to show goods." If this principle is followed out, it means the building of good will. There are a lot of people engaged in retail selling who believe

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they have interpreted this old saying by making attractive displays of merchandise. Merchandise so displayed will in many instances sell itself, but get behind those displays by intelligently offering items displayed to customers in the store.

- A. If you decide to put on a special deal on some item advantageously bought, or to attract customers to the store, put your special out in front—in the middle of the store—where everybody can see it. Man it with a pleasant personality—a clerk who has been told everything there is to know about that particular item. Solicit every possible buyer, not obnoxiously way lay, but solicit.
- B. Your clerks must know their goods. A sales person who knows what he is talking about creates confidence and makes sales. *E. g.*, I recently bought a hot water heater. The selection had narrowed down to two—both good—both the same price. The order went to the man who knew all about his own heater. His knowledge brought confidence to his proposition.
- C. Window displays make better retail selling possible, but the window display only works part time, if the proprietor and his clerks do not link up with it by inside displays and inside personal selling. The purpose of a window display is to sell goods, so during the time a certain item is on display, back it up with personal effort. Show every customer at the close of a sale, the item in the window. Talk it up. Price it. "Let me include this in your package."
- D. The retailer who feels he is doing a manufacturer a favor by giving him his window, and then not backing up the display, is not giving the manufacturer a square deal, and is cheating himself. A good hearty cooperation makes money for both.
- E. The best place to successfully carry on retail selling is right at the wrapping counter, or the cash register. Have handy some good *push* item of value. Show it, speak intelligently of it, recommend it—and "will one be enough?" and a sale is made.
- F. Always put price tickets on displayed items. Tell the people how much it is. That breaks down the fear of buyers who do not like to be embarrassed by asking prices of something they can't afford.
- G. When an item is shown to a customer, don't stand idly by with your mouth shut, or looking out the window, but explain the merits of your proposition, and if you have something *else* to sell, show it and explain why it is better.

As an employer sells—so sell his clerks. Sell them what they want, and let it go at that, is a lazy principle.

It is not an exaggeration to say there are thousands of retail sellers, proprietors, clerks, boys, at this late day, closing their interview with customers with "Nothing else today?" "Nothing more?" "Is that all?" The latter may not be as criminal as the first, but it is just as hard on the cash register.

Change that "What else can I do for you today?" to "Let me show you this new imported soap;" "By the way, we are running a special sale on writing paper;" "Fresh shipment of candy this morning;" "Here is a new idea in a tooth brush."

Always recommend good things. Line up five or six things, so if you fall down on one, you have another.

Divide your items—some for young women—some for the older women. Don't insult a poor, plain spinster, by offering rouge. Study your people so as to know what to offer. Get into the present century with "Let me show you." But before you start know what you are talking about. Beget confidence by a knowledge of your wares. Get the "Good morning, Mrs. Smith," the "Hello, Tommy" introductions to working. The cheerful atmosphere—and the intelligent close-up.

*Seasonal Selling.*—There are four or five distinct times a year when certain items are actually in demand. The spring, for instance, is usually house cleaning time. Disinfectants, cleansing soap. Play up the suggestion of bath cabinet renovation, etc. In the summer, vacation needs. Nearly everything in the drug store. Supplies of soap, dental cream, headache tablets, bathing tablets, or get into the gift line—candy, cameras, etc. A straight run for three or four months. As fall approaches, winter needs should be put to the fore. Nasal sprays, cold tablets, cough syrups. I know of one retail store in the middle west that makes a pretty penny out of featuring chamois vests.

*Two-way Selling* is an old story, and a telling way of selling. Always offer something. "No trouble to show goods."

In a prescription pharmacy, there must be waits. Customers waiting for prescriptions are always good prospects. Arrange a comfortable place for the customer to wait. A few chairs, a rug. Then in juxtaposition, display a constantly changing array of merchandise. Sick room supplies; little novelties that would appeal to a person confined to a room. Ingenuity will take care of the items to be displayed. The prescriptionist always has the opportunity of suggestion when handing out the prescription.

Some stores observe the rule that the customers coming into the store should not be approached; that it is beneath the dignity of the store to have demonstrations. A salesman behind the counter can always with dignity offer his wares.

To-day, many retail pharmacies are handling periodicals. A Vermont dealer is making a good profit by going through his periodicals, and neatly stamping all advertised items which he carries.

*Advertising.*—The live wire to-day, who may not himself advertise, can get in on all good things by simply watching the magazines, and newspapers, and lining up. By displaying things advertised, the customer is sold when he arrives. Many dealers blindly, selfishly, won't line up; afraid they are doing something for nothing; but such men simply are overlooking chances for easy additional sales.

Druggists in small towns have so many chances to get rich, it is hard to see why they remain poor. Dealers handling paints, wait for the farmer to come in and buy paint for house or barn. Dealers handling stock food could go out and book future orders. Local newspaper advertising with direct tie-up or window displays, counter displays, and push selling. Countryside signs are easy to put up. Make up a little country picnic and tack signs as you go.

*Standardization.*—One great discouragement to proprietors and clerks is the great number of items they have to sell—10 or 15 cough syrups, 2 or 3 milk of mag-

nesias, half dozen pills, and so on, but this hit-and-miss selling can be eliminated. The responsibility rests on the proprietor or manager. He should standardize his lines. Carry the staples for which there is a regular call, keeping in mind the necessity of quality in accordance with that call. Cut out all possible duplication, standardize the store—then prepare tables of profitable items, and display those items—offer them to customers, bearing in mind, when merchandise is offered, the person offering should know all about it.

*Courses in Colleges of Pharmacy.*—Our colleges of pharmacy could do wonders to improve the drug business (I said drug business, purposely, meaning to include all branches), by conducting courses in Store Management, Buying, Retail Selling, Advertising, Accounting. There is just as much need for this kind of teaching as there is for teaching botany, chemistry, and pharmacognosy. A general practitioner of law may not lean to criminal law; he may prefer real estate law, or tax law, yet, if he is a general lawyer, he must know them all. If our drug stores could be devoted exclusively to prescriptions, urinalysis, sick room supplies, etc., it would be different, but that is not the order of things in our country, so the pharmacist must combine the professional with the commercial to keep up with the procession. If his business is a two-way business, he must operate both ways, and by being a good merchandiser, he attracts more people to his store. Thus he can expect a greater volume of professional business, and with the greater volume he has greater chance to better prepare for this part of the business.

To my mind, a college of pharmacy owes its students a good, strong course in retail merchandising, and by teaching students how to prosper, they will make it possible to conduct better pharmacies, and more effectively protect the health of the community.

#### COMMENT.

Quite a number took part in the discussion which followed the reading of the paper; some of the points were emphasized, and suggestions made that differed in methods as means to the same end—increasing volume and profit, and develop salesmanship.

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#### STIMULATING AN INTEREST IN CHEMISTRY.

Through a fund provided by Mr. and Mrs. Francis P. Garvan of New York, the American Chemical Society has carried on a country-wide essay contest in the high schools. This has just ended and prizes will be awarded in each State and in addition scholarships. A variety of subjects were submitted, all dealing with chemistry in various relations to life, in the home, the community, the farm, the factory and for purposes of industrial development and national defense. In order to develop the chemical industries popular interest must be turned to the study of this department of science.

There is opportunity of developing a greater popular interest concerning pharmaceutical

subjects—there is a growing interest—people will attend popular lectures on such topics; they will "listen-in." The result has been most encouraging to members of the faculty of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. The series of twelve lectures of the season of 1922-1923 has been published in book form. The subjects broadcasted and presented by lecturers this season include—"What Is Chocolate," "Sugar as a Medicine," "Food and Poison," "The Romance of Drugs," "A Bit of Food Chemistry," "Our Minute Enemies and How to Rout Them," "Something about Gases," etc. Dean Frederick J. Wulling's series of talks relating to pharmacy was broadcasted and gave him an opportunity to interest the public relating to the Headquarters Building; reference is made elsewhere in this issue of the JOURNAL.