

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.

HUMAN NATURE APPEALS WHICH ATTRACT ATTENTION TO DISPLAYS.

(Continued from December JOURNAL.)

A druggist once drew hundreds of curious people to his window when he pasted a huge sign on the glass which said in letters four feet high, "98 cents." An instinct is an inherited tendency, we all have to act the same way under the same conditions. To be sure, our instinctive acts are subject to modification, as the result of education and environment, but the fact remains that to keep from acting instinctively like other people conscious efforts must be made. The tendency to react instinctively is always there.

One of the most frequent instinctive reactions is the desire to get something for nothing. In the case of the window display just mentioned, the irresistible impulse of the people who passed was to look further at the display. Why? The figure, 98 cents, suggests a bargain—an opportunity to buy something for less than its usual price. What is to be bought isn't so important just at the moment as the fact that is telegraphed to the minds of passersby, "Here must be a bargain. Else, how could it be 98 cents?"

Then the instinct of curiosity also expresses itself. What is it that can be had for 98 cents? Thus one instinct helps another to bring attention to a display.

Another interesting use of the instinct of curiosity to draw attention to a display was made by a hardware merchant on the Pacific coast. He covered the inside of all of the glass of a display window with heavy, opaque wrapping paper. The only place a person could see the inside of the window was through a port-hole about 8 inches in diameter cut through the paper in the exact center of the front window. The curious could peer through this hole and see within a wondrous display of miniature electric railroads. The looker was sure to marvel at the display because while looking through this tiny port-hole his attention was certain to be fixed on nothing else but this display.

There are practical difficulties in the use of that kind of a display. It is perfectly apparent that only a small fraction of the people who normally would see the display could be accommodated one at a time in the same period by peering through the port-hole. I doubt if the added attention these few gave who did see

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the display was worth as much as a more casual survey which a great many more people would have given it if the window had been open.

As a matter of fact, the display had enough individuality and novelty to attract and hold attention on its own merits without resorting to this forced appeal to the instinct of curiosity.

There is a tendency to overestimate also the value of the bargain appeal in attracting attention to drug-store displays. A window full of patent medicines or cigars all at seemingly bargain prices has, many times, a wonderful pulling power. Don't forget, however, that an offer of a dollar article for 79 cents, while it is a cut of 21 per cent, only offers the customer the opportunity to save 21 pennies. True, most people are not averse to saving 21 pennies but they will not and cannot afford to go very far out of their way to make the saving. The time, effort, car fare and other expenses involved would be much greater than the possible saving.

On the other hand, a 21 per cent reduction on a living room chair selling originally for \$100 is something to bring people long distances to buy because this is an opportunity to save not 21 pennies but \$21. The furniture man has made no greater a price sacrifice proportionately than the druggist, but the drawing power of his offer is increased immeasurably because of the difference in the amount of the money that is involved in the individual sale.

Closely related to the bargain or something for nothing instinct is the acquisitive instinct—the desire to have things. That is one of the secrets of the success of free samples. People accept something they perhaps would not obtain otherwise and become interested in the purchase of a large size package as a result of the merits they find in the sample.

One very effective use of the acquisitive instinct—fortified by the something for nothing appeal was in the display of a shaving soap. The central figure was a life size photographic cut-out of a man with one hand outstretched toward the front of the window. In this hand he held a real sample of the shaving soap. Over his head a sign in large letters read, "Will you accept a free sample of — shaving soap?"

The natural desire we all possess to have things, especially when they are desirable and free, was appealed to with great force in this picture. The natural impulse is to respond to such an appeal.

A huge picture of an attractive baby draws the attention of women and men passersby because of the love of children (the parental instinct) which we all possess in one degree or another.

There are many other instincts to which appeals may be directed in order to attract attention to a display. Among them are imitation, pride, self-preservation, comfort, play, beauty, cleanliness, competition, sociability, sex, hunger, hunting and construction.

In the use of any instinctive appeal, the principle is the same. Remember that an instinct is a tendency we all have to act in a particular way under the same conditions. Displays which attract attention on this basis, therefore, have in them a quality which should have an appeal to everybody.

This doesn't mean that 100 per cent of the people who pass a display which tries to attract attention because of its appeal to an instinct or a group of instincts will pause transfixed for minutes to study the display in all its details. There

are too many other things competing for their attention at the same time. Some of these other things may attract attention also by instinctive appeals. The instinctive appeals simply give a display a greater chance to succeed than it otherwise would have. This is because of the universal appeal of the instincts.

Emotions are mental states which tend to occur in every one under the same conditions. A group of people standing on a corner waiting for a street car scurry hastily for safety when a recklessly driven automobile bears down upon them. The instinct of self-preservation expresses itself in this pell mell rush to safety. At the same time, each one of these people has a feeling of fear. That is one way in which emotions express themselves—as accompaniments to various instincts. Sometimes, however, they may be expressed without any corresponding instinctive action. Emotions which can be employed effectively to attract attention to displays are joy, sorrow, sympathy and wonder. Some of the more negative emotions may be used also when appropriate; anger and disgust are examples.

People who like to think they are practical-minded often express doubt at the wisdom of spending the thousands of dollars which the large department stores pay every year for holiday decorations. They wonder how such decorations possibly can have selling value.

Shrewd merchants know, however, that these decorations attract thousands of people to their stores and give added drawing power to the windows decorated in the same spirit. Why?

Christmas, for instance, is universally observed as a holiday in the United States. The Christmas spirit has become a phrase signifying good cheer, good fellowship and generosity. It is hard to find a person in the United States who doesn't have at least some interest in Christmas. In children it is the magic interest for many weeks before and after the holiday.

The merchant who decorates his store and his merchandise in keeping with this wide-flung interest in Christmas, therefore, transfers immediately some of this Christmas spirit to his store and to the things he has to sell. People are interested in Christmas. His store and his merchandise express the spirit of Christmas. Therefore, people are interested in his store and his merchandise.

There are few stores indeed which take full advantage of this opportunity to transfer Christmas spirit and interests to their store and merchandise. It is not sufficient just to show a few items of Christmas merchandise or a box or two of candy in a holly wrapper. The whole store and the people in it must express the spirit of Christmas. To accomplish this, decorations have to be much more than a crepe paper bell at the door or a couple of sprigs of holly in the window. Streamers, garlands, wreaths, holly, greens, all heighten the appeal in the store to this widespread appeal of Christmas. The services of a skilled decorator familiar also with a store's merchandizing problems will be found particularly valuable.

I have spoken at length of the value to a store of making itself especially attractive at the Christmas season and that this result may be accomplished by decorations in harmony with the spirit of Christmas should be used. What is true of Christmas is true, of course, of the other holidays which may be observed in the store's community during the year.

In fact, a store may skilfully capitalize the interest which exists in any custom or tradition or object of great public interest in just the same way. It pays

to be magnanimous and generous in tying up with customs, traditions and other public interests, rather than to attempt any cheap and rather forced tie-up with store's own merchandise.

The druggists who have used "Pharmacy Week" windows know this. Those who have made a display designed primarily to show the professional nature of pharmacy have been uniformly complimented and have earned the respect and good-will of their patrons. Those who have made "Pharmacy Week" an excuse to conduct a cut-price drive on home remedies have produced this reaction among their patrons—"Oh, this Pharmacy Week is just another scheme to get our money away from us." Thus neither the store nor "Pharmacy Week" has profited.

(Another article in this series will appear in the next issue.)

TOO MANY DRUG STORES.*

BY WORTLEY F. RUDD.

I had the privilege of reading a paper on this subject before the Section on Education and Legislation a few years ago. Under the auspices of the Drug Trade Bureau of Public Information it was syndicated and rather widely published or commented on. All of the comments that I saw were favorable except one—that came from Philadelphia. At the time the paper was read Dr. Jacob Diner, somewhat in defense of the situation in New York City, said in concluding his discussion of the subject "So while the figures are interesting and some deductions may be drawn therefrom, they are not conclusive that there is an over-production of pharmacists or an over-production of drug stores." We agree, of course, that the truth or falsity of the statement contained in the subject is a matter of opinion. The writer's opinion is that there are at least twice as many drug stores as there should be, taking the country as a whole. He believes further that the organizations whose close coöperation can gradually decrease the number of stores, *viz.*, the Colleges of Pharmacy, the Examining Boards, the A. Ph. A., the N. W. D. A. and the N. A. R. D., are not yet united in their acceptance of the principle that there are too many stores nor has any one of them really worked out a plan for decreasing the number even when they have assented to the policy itself.

From the most reliable information that I have been able to obtain on the subject, there is a net increase of about 500 stores per year in the country as a whole. On the 1924 basis of 2236 potential customers to a store on the average and an increase in population of the country of between one and two million a year, the new stores are actually raising this average slightly but too slowly to have any practical effect upon the situation.

Information has come to me recently that in one large city 62% of the retail pharmacists can buy goods only on a C. O. D. basis, in another 32% and in another 42%. Such an economic unsoundness must ultimately be a breeding ground for unethical and even irregular practices. Is it not our business to consider well such conditions? Is it not time for somebody in pharmacy to take action?

* Read before Section on Commercial Interests, A. Ph. A., St. Louis meeting, 1927.