

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.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EFFECTIVE DISPLAY.

(Continued from January JOURNAL.)

If a display is to succeed, the first thing it must do is to attract attention. In preceding articles in this series I have undertaken to explain the various principles and devices which may be employed effectively to attract attention to a display.

Merely to attract attention, however, is not sufficient. A display also must hold the attention it has attracted. It is one thing to see a display and quite another to look at it. While casual and passing glances do make impressions, the most productive and resultful are those which represent earnest concentration of mind.

We climb the entrance steps to our offices a dozen times a day, year in and year out. Yet, try as we will, we can't tell how many steps there are in this flight of stairs we climb so often. This is as it should be, for if we were to clutter our memories with such useless impressions and facts, there wouldn't be much room left for the meaningful and worthwhile.

It is easy to see, however, that if window and store displays get no more attention than the office steps we climb a dozen times a day, these displays cannot possibly be very productive. They would get some casual attention, to be sure, which eventually would build into the minds of passersby a consciousness of what is being displayed. Remember, though, that we don't have the frequent daily contact with the displays of stores that are trying to sell us something that we do with anything so familiar as the office entrance steps.

Attention, once attracted, can be held to displays by various devices and principles. As in the case of the ways by which attention is attracted to displays, these devices and principles are of two general classes: first, mechanical, which is effective regardless of what is displayed; and, second, interest, which is a result of the inherent attention qualities of whatever is being displayed.

Consider first the mechanical devices and principles. The first of these is unity. By unity is meant the singleness of purpose of a display. For instance, a window full of hair brushes certainly has unity. The one and only object of that window is to create interest in and desire for hair brushes.

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If the window contained also candy, cigars, perfume and crude drugs, it is apparent at once that the unity of the window would be destroyed. It is too long a mental jump from hair brushes to candy, to cigars, to perfume, to crude drugs. The result is people don't get a clear impression of anything, or at least what impressions they do get are gotten with infinitely more difficulty. Consider how difficult it would be to learn anything from a textbook on the pages of which there was an inextricably mixed hodge-podge of five or six unrelated subjects. Displays are intended to be educational—to acquaint people with the merchandise a store has to sell and create in these people a desire to have this merchandise. A display, therefore, must have unity if it is to hold a person's attention with a minimum of effort and a maximum productiveness.

A display doesn't need to be confined to one single kind of merchandise in order to achieve this essential attention-holding factor called unity. Related merchandise may be and frequently should be shown with the merchandise which is the feature of the display. Just as a textbook gradually leads its readers into more and more complicated and diversified subject matter, so may a display effectively introduce related merchandise.

In the case of the hair brushes just cited, any druggist knows that the merchandise to display with them includes such items as combs, other kinds of brushes, and toilet preparations for the hair. Without sacrificing to an important degree the drawing power of the featured articles in the display, items which are readily associated with them can be displayed incidentally and the possibilities of increasing their sale increased accordingly. More business is thus to be had from the same display without sacrificing the essential attention-holding principle of unity.

Some people may wonder what the unity is in a window display of four dozen different kinds of home remedies and patent medicines, each with a large price tag conspicuously attached. The object of such a display is to convey to passersby the apparent bargains to be had in the store on a wide variety of home remedies and patent medicines. The unity is not in the merchandise, but rather in the bargain appeal. That is the one dominant note of the display which unifies it.

A second mechanical principle which helps a display to hold attention is restriction. The intent of restriction is to confine a person's attention to one display until he has observed the display long enough for it to make an impression on him.

As I mentioned in the case of unity, a person receives only a blurred impression or no impression at all when a display is not unified and shows objects totally unrelated.

Exactly the same result is obtained if a display lacks restriction. This is because the eye, when not restricted, wanders from one thing to another within the range of vision and these things within the range of vision at one time are most likely totally unrelated to each other. For a display to make the strongest possible impression it should have at one time undivided attention. Mechanically it should be so constructed as to hold a person's attention just as long as necessary to accomplish the purpose of the display. The display should be so constructed that nothing in it will tend to cause a person's attention to wander away from it.

Now the question is, how is restriction accomplished in a display? In general, the display should be so constructed that from whatever angle it may be seen the effect is to draw the eye toward the center or middle. That is, to draw the eye

directly to the most important part of the display and also at the farthest distance from competing attractions.

In type, parentheses are used to set off words, phrases and even sentences which are intended to stand by themselves. Recall that the shape of the left-hand mark is bowed to the left in the center, while at the top and bottom the ends point toward the matter which is inclosed—the matter which it is intended to set apart from the rest of the page.

Similarly, the right-hand parenthesis is bowed to the right in the center and the top and bottom ends point toward the matter which is to be inclosed.

Now suppose that the positions of these marks are reversed. The right-hand mark is placed at the left and the left-hand mark is at the right. Exactly the opposite to the intended effect is obtained. The mark at the left tends to draw the eye to left and away from the bracketed matter and, similarly, the mark at the right tends to lead the eye right on out of the bracketed matter into the following matter from which it originally was intended to be set apart.

From this simple illustration, it is apparent, I am sure, that a display should be so laid out that it tends to confine the eye, once attracted, within the space occupied by the display.

A grocer once disregarded this principle of restriction in the following way. He had a life-size cut-out of a jolly, fat butcher in his window, as one of the figures in a very attractive display calling attention to his meat market. The figure of course was large and, accordingly, was placed at one side of the display. Unfortunately, the jolly butcher's head was turned away from the display of which he was intended to be a part; in fact he pointed directly to the display of a competing butcher next door!

The whole effect of restriction is to place a display in a frame which sets it apart and distinguishes it from the surrounding things which all the time are competing for attention.

Closely allied with restriction as a mechanical principle which helps to hold attention to a display is direction. The effect of direction is to lead the eye from whatever it may chance to catch sight of in the display to the things which the merchant wants it most to see.

The most common device to accomplish this purpose is an arrow. In fact, the use of the arrow is so frequent that it has lost some of the distinctiveness that any device used in a display should have.

Ribbons and streamers are used frequently for the same purpose. A confectioner sought an unusual way to call attention in a display to the fact that the ingredients in his candies came from all over the world. He arranged attractively in his window the dishes containing each of these ingredients and as a background he used a map of the world. Then he ran bright colored ribbons from the various dishes to the spots on the map from which they came.

In reading, our eyes move from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Reading is such an important part of modern life that our eyes habitually move in this direction. Long continued habit has made that natural. Movement in any other way consequently requires extra effort. A child can recite the alphabet as rapidly as he can talk, but when asked to recite it backward,

the chances are he won't be able to do it at all. Although not as apparent, eye movements which are contrary to habit are similarly difficult.

The connection of natural eye movement with the principles of display is this. Displays should be so constructed that, wherever possible, the natural eye movement can be followed. We all would have trouble reading a printed page or studying an advertisement which disregarded the usual eye movement: left to right and top to bottom. Don't expect people to spend much time following the sequence of a display which disregards this principle.

For instance, don't expect people to start at the bottom of a display and then move their eyes gradually upward as they take in the various aspects of the display. Take advantage of the way people's eyes naturally follow things and arrange displays accordingly.

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

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MEDICINAL WHISKY TO THE NUMBER OF DRUG STORES AND THE REGISTRATION IN SCHOOLS OF PHARMACY.

BY J. G. BEARD.

For some years now many people have been assuming that the sale of whisky on prescriptions is partly responsible not only for the increase in the number of drug stores in "Whisky States" but for the enlarged enrollment of students in the pharmacy schools of the same states. For example, some time back the pharmaceutical press and public made frequent reference to the great increase in drug stores in New York state, and in every case blamed medicinal whisky for the growth. Other illustrations have been cited to show that legal permission to dispense whisky heightens the urge to engage in the drug business to such an extent that not only more persons enter pharmacy schools but more stores are opened to take advantage of the lucrative business of whisky selling.

This writer believed that there was more fallacy than fact in many of the assumptions made, and acting on this belief he recently made inquiry of responsible pharmacists in every state to find out what relationship, if any, exists between prescription-whisky and store and student increase. The results of this inquiry seem to show that whisky *per se* has little to do with the growth in numbers either of stores or of students. It is true that facts and figures from a few states give affirmation to the idea that whisky is a controlling factor, but data from other states are directly contradictory, and from still other states no significance can be read into the returns. Taking the country as a whole one gathers that a change in merchandizing methods and a growing demand for neighborhood drug service are the factors responsible for the increased number of drug stores. As the number of stores grows greater and as prerequisite laws become more widespread it follows as a necessary sequence that the enrollment in pharmacy schools should become correspondingly larger. These natural causes and not whisky are responsible for more drug stores and more pharmacy students.

The foregoing conclusions become more plausible when one studies the facts and figures to be appended below. The data that will be quoted came from officials