

slogan as "The Drug Business Is Not So Bad—But, Let's Make It Better." I sincerely believe that by an optimistic attitude, coupled with all the knowledge we can get, not only of our own personal enterprises, but of the drug business in general, and backed by a firm determination to make the most of our opportunities, we can overcome most of whatever it is that is the matter with the drug business.

TAKING THE PRESCRIPTION DEPARTMENT OUT OF THE RED.*

Advertising may be said to have had its greatest impetus when the Government decided that it was a deductible item in making out an income tax report. Certain it is that advertising has grown by leaps and bounds and we are now in the midst of an advertising age. It is a poor cause that does not have its due share of publicity and propaganda. We mold public opinion with advertising; we try to keep within striking distance of mass production; we are doing our best to educate the dear public to consume more than it needs and to believe that luxuries are necessities. We are well on our way to the two-car-per-family stage.

I began my career in the drug business at about the time when a well-known preparation for soothing rheumatic pains to the tune of six bottles for five dollars had a large sale, and Sarsaparilla was a flourishing item. Bustles, hoop skirts, and copper-toed shoes were going out, but mustache-cups and cigar store Indians were still in vogue and going strong. National advertising was practically unknown.

In those days we never heard of women smoking cigarettes. To suggest reaching for a cigarette instead of a piece of candy would have been an insult to any young woman. Halitosis and B. O. were with us but were not referred to in polite society.

The present handmaiden of advertising, the assistant "premiere classe," is now installment selling, a thing that was frowned upon by our immediate ancestors. More recently there has entered the picture a new character representing style change.

Strangely enough, there is more money spent in advertising drug store commodities than is spent to give publicity to the entire automotive industry. Is it any wonder, therefore, that our modest prescription departments, the "submerged tenth," so to speak, receive so little attention in the way of advertising? Besides, we are surrounded by a code of ethics in the professions. Medicine cannot be advertised, even though it is a fact that we seldom find a surgeon frowning upon the publicity that comes to him because of his presence at the bedside of a king, or his signature on the two o'clock bulletin; and the truth of that statement is borne out right down the line. Locally, it is an operation on the president of the Rotary Club or a prominent church worker.

The copy writer for the professional man, however, must possess the subtle touch. He must be resourceful. He will do well to place all his superlatives in a well-concealed hiding place.

* An address by H. S. Noel before the Section on Commercial Interests, Rapid City, South Dakota.

How shall we give the prescription department publicity in a way that will not endanger relations with the doctors? There is little to spend on the percentage of sales volume basis. We must look first to the forms of publicity, the cost of which is small.

Not all suggested ways and means of advertising are applicable to every store. Personal calls on the doctors represent publicity, cost nothing, and can be made fruitful. Many pharmacists feel it beneath their dignity to do work of this character; others appear to be timid about doing it. The pharmaceutical houses will be pleased indeed to note your interest in increasing the demand for their specialties. They can always be depended upon to cooperate to the fullest extent in supplying high-class printed matter. Manufacturers will be found following carefully-made plans laid out far in advance. They use medical journals, direct mail advertising, representatives' calls, sampling campaigns, etc., to stimulate demand. Why should they not be pleased to have the pharmacist tie up his activities locally with their national publicity? It is being done by a few pharmacists with success. Apathy on the part of the remainder seems to be the most serious difficulty to overcome.

There are available for the use of pharmacists a series of newspaper articles, short, to the point, non-technical. Call this propaganda if you will, it is still constructive, educational material. The editors of small town papers are pleased to use it in the interests of public health. They like to have some one assume responsibility for the authorship of such articles. The pharmacist helps his cause and his calling by taking credit for the articles, which mention no manufacturer's name or his product. These articles deal with simple facts concerning disease prevention. Smallpox may be the subject of one editorial, the Prevention of Diphtheria, How Rabies Is Spread, Typhoid and Its Prevention, Acute Poliomyelitis, Diabetes, Tetanus. Such articles are helpful at all times. They supply information that may not otherwise be available to certain people.

Few pharmacists realize the advertising value of an assortment of biological items kept in proper storage. They look at the immediate return only. Biologicals are here to stay. Their use is increasing; the products have attained higher standards of purity and are more specific. I know of pharmacists who, not realizing the possibilities of biologicals in their stores, contend that there is no demand. True, they had none, but when a stock was placed in the store a demand arose. Certain it is that products of this character are being used in ever-increasing amounts. Someone gets the business. Here again we have a matter of potentialities. An investment of \$50.00 to \$75.00 places in stock a fair assortment of biological products.

The prescription business cannot be stimulated by stunt advertising, sales appeal or merchandising effort. Anything that enhances confidence in the store, however, is good publicity. There is no better form of publicity for a pharmacist than keeping his name ever before the physicians in a favorable way.

The financial limitations of most pharmacies make it necessary to keep advertising expense down to a sum in keeping with reason.

I know a pharmacist in Colorado who finds best advertising results in the little things that are usually forgotten in the business world. He does little favors, apparently in all sincerity, simply because he enjoys doing them. As a matter of fact, he is indulging in the subtlest form of publicity and it is paying dividends.

His pharmacy is directly across the street from a professional building. On a hot summer day, at an opportune moment, he sends his fountain boy with a cooling drink over to the office of a physician or two who happen to be in and not too busy. The boy is told what to say: "Mr. Stein says you looked warm over here. He thought a drink might prove refreshing."

When the member of the family of a physician or a customer he knows is ill, in the hospital, celebrating a birthday, being graduated, or what not, Mr. Stein occasionally sends flowers. He finds it costs little and counts for much. He is careful to make inquiry concerning the condition of patients from members of the family who bring in prescriptions.

A Spokane pharmacy catered to many physicians and did a big prescription business. Having a refrigerator of large capacity and doing business with many country people, the idea came to one of the proprietors that he could do a favor for a few of his physician friends. He offered to buy butter, eggs and chickens for the doctor and store them until called for. It proved rather trying sometimes, but resulted in visits to the store by physicians, interest in the prescription department, and noticeable results. It was a species of advertising.

A small city pharmacist of my acquaintance has a scientific bent. In his pharmacy there is little opportunity to make use of his knowledge. He is fond of laboratory work, and conducts many interesting experiments. Capitalizing his talent, he writes letters every few weeks, as circumstances warrant, to the doctors in his store zone. He develops interesting points, writes of recent discoveries, new synthetics, ties up his pharmacy with tests that he has made, quotes authorities and winds up by inviting the doctors to come in and discuss the points of mutual interest. The result of his effort is that he commands the respect of every doctor in town. They look upon him as an authority in his line, bring problems to him frequently, and seek his opinion.

In Wheeling, West Virginia, is a pharmacy the proprietor of which is not complaining about the lack of prescription business. Last December a letter was sent to all the physicians in Wheeling who had sent him prescriptions during the previous twelve months. In the communication he spoke of the fact that he had filled 40,000 prescriptions during the year, of which — number had been written by the doctor addressed. He expressed gratitude for the fine coöperation accorded, said he hoped to do as well or better the coming year, etc.

He found the doctors much interested. They referred to his letter, asked where they stood in rank, expressed intentions of doing better next year, made a game out of what proved to be fine publicity for this pharmacy.

In Utah an enterprising pharmacist built a very simple and attractive window with encyclopedias opened to the full-page portraits of the men who had been President of the United States during the time that his pharmacy had filled so many thousand prescriptions. The photographs were those of Cleveland, 1885; Harrison, 1889; Cleveland, 1893; McKinley, 1897; Roosevelt, 1901; Taft, 1909; Wilson, 1913; Harding, 1921; Coolidge, 1925; and Hoover, 1929. A sign in the window read, "Cleveland Was President When We Began Filling Prescriptions."

A New York State pharmacy learns in advance the items being featured by a pharmaceutical manufacturer whose products are stocked and featured in his store. Supplementing the work of the manufacturer's detail representatives, at the time

the items are being featured in the medical journals and by direct advertising, the head prescription clerk makes from two to three calls on physicians on a rainy day. He drops in on the physician, makes his call brief, but manages to let the doctor know about the store's service, stock, etc. Occasionally, the clerk leaves a stock package of one of the store's own specialties. In particular, I refer to a 50 per cent egg emulsion of cod liver oil that was an excellent sample of pharmaceutical art. This pharmacist has been doing this for one year. His opinion is that it has been most helpful to him.

In towns of over a certain size where there are at least fifteen or more physicians and where newspaper circulation looms big in potentials, pharmacists have used educational campaigns that proved very helpful indeed.

An Indianapolis pharmacist, starting from scratch, has built up a very satisfactory business. He credits newspaper advertising with having been extremely helpful, yet in no instance has he ever referred to a single product sold in his ethical pharmacy. The copy is brief, the space small. The advertisements appear once weekly, on Wednesday evening. The purport is the value to the public of the service rendered by the physician. For example, here are two samples of the copy used.

HEED NATURE'S WARNINGS.

A sore throat or a persistent headache is a message to your brain of a condition that should be remedied. Don't attempt to treat yourself. It's always best to consult a physician. Oftentimes it will avert serious consequences later. When the physician writes a prescription, bring it to us to be filled. We are specialists at this work.

CAUSES DIFFER FROM SYMPTOMS.

Physicians treat causes, not symptoms. Self-medication means treating symptoms—quite the wrong way to go about getting rid of the trouble. A visit to the doctor, nine times out of ten is the cheapest thing in the long run. Trust your physician and your pharmacist. When the physician writes a prescription, bring it to us to be filled. We are specialists at this work.

First of all, this pharmacist sent the entire copy of the year's campaign to a selected list of doctors, asked their opinion, and supplied a post card for reply. In a letter, he expressed the thought that he could be of reciprocal assistance to the medical men of the city by doing for them what obviously they could not very well do for themselves. He told of the campaign, what it was intended to accomplish, and expressed the hope that the physicians' reaction would be favorable.

At regular intervals during the life of the campaign, which was to run for a year, this pharmacist dropped a card to the doctors, referred to his advertising, called attention to service, etc. He heard much favorable comment. The Indiana State Medical Society passed a resolution thanking this pharmacist for his interest in them and his excellent work. When the year was up, he saw so much evidence of the goodwill engendered that he felt obliged to continue the work.

A pharmacist in the State of Washington used liberal display space in newspapers, that is forceful. Some of his copy was devoted to a series of examples ending with the phrase, "Wasn't he foolish?"

Here are examples:

"A came into my store and asked me what I had for Bright's Disease. I asked him how he knew he had Bright's Disease. He answered that everyone had told him so and that for the past three years he had taken everything recommended. I sent him to a physician. He did not have Bright's Disease and for less than ten dollars he was a well, strong man. Wasn't he foolish?"

The series continued with an example of a man who for years had been treating a cough that proved to be tuberculosis. The pharmacist persuaded him to see a physician. He is now on the way to recovery. Another treated hemorrhoids, spent \$500, received no benefit. A physician cured him for \$15.00. A bruised skin became cancerous for lack of attention, etc.

This pharmacist also justified his prices in his copy in the following manner.

"We can buy Epsom Salt for 8 cents a pound, but we pay 22 for the best."
"We can buy alum for 16 cents a pound but for the best we pay 64 cents."

From another advertisement the following paragraph is taken:

"If an infected tonsil or appendix should not be removed because God or Nature gave it to us, why should hair or whiskers be cut, decayed teeth extracted, nails trimmed or shoes or clothes worn?"

"See your doctor when you have symptoms," says this pharmacist. In another advertisement:

"I hereby solicit all the prescription business of first-class physicians of good standing in the medical profession especially those who are as conscientious in their endeavor to make you well and keep you well as I try to be."

A Chicago pharmacist advertises in local medical journals. Fifty per cent of his volume is by telephone. When a prescription is received from a new customer, a letter is dispatched. It is a form letter neatly filled in. The first letter is followed up carefully with four or five others. This publicity has proved very helpful.

A retailer who heard of this pharmacist's plan decided to make use of it. For him it did nothing. He was careless, expected immediate results, spent considerable money and finally abandoned the idea. Advertising is not a panacea. It is cumulative in effect; it must be kept going.

Any of the ideas suggested in this talk are available to those who are interested. I will be pleased indeed to supply the complete letters, layouts, copy, etc., and to assist in any way possible. Time and space limitations prohibit the use of such exhibits here.

It is not enough to desire a prescription business. The store that wants this business must, of course, be a store of ideals, must possess character and must be prepared to live up to a high standard of service. That goes without saying.

Pharmacy is truly a business as well as a science and an art. To increase prestige the most valuable asset any store can have is the confidence of the physicians and the public. The words of Benjamin Franklin are not amiss in pharmacy. "Keep your shop and your shop will keep you."

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