

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Conducted by Paul C. Olsen.*

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SALESMANSHIP PROBLEMS IN DRUG STORES.

BY PAUL C. OLSEN.

The familiar "companion" or "suggested" sale is the form of salesmanship most frequently recommended for use in drug stores. The theory is that if the hundred people who come in a drug store are each asked to buy an additional 25-cent item the store's receipts will be swelled by the amount of these additional sales which were made (supposedly) at no extra selling cost, with the result that practically all the gross profit on them is net profit. If fifty of the hundred people so asked actually do buy the additional 25-cent item, the store's sales for the day are thus increased by \$12.50.

Some of the peculiar conditions incident to the retail sale of merchandise in drug stores make the "companion" or "suggested" sale an extremely hazardous and costly way to attempt to increase sales and profits.

One of these special conditions is the fact that regular customers visit a drug store twice a week or oftener. It is a physical impossibility for the proprietor and his sales people to remember, therefore, who have and who have not had their attention called to the additional 25-cent item which is being "pushed," especially if there are several salespeople in the store. Thus regular customers upon whom the store must depend for its continued success are put in the position often of saying "No" to the same request twice or more in one week. Naturally they resent these repeated importunities and are quite likely to transfer all their succeeding purchases to stores in which they will not be thus annoyed.

The second special condition which operates to reduce the effectiveness of "companion" or "suggested" sales in drug stores is the fact that practically all the people who come into drug stores have a definite purchase in mind before they come inside. They are not shoppers. All too often they have or feel that they have neither the time nor the inclination to listen to a sales talk. Thus the frame of mind of large numbers of drug stores' customers is one which certainly is not most conducive to the success of extra selling effort.

One of the elements of success in personal salesmanship is a knowledge of the individual peculiarities and characteristics of customers as well as the frame of mind in which they appear to be when a special personal selling effort is undertaken. The retail drug store salesman who serves 100 and even 200 customers in

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