

Nightingale, Dorothy, and Schaefer, Arthur

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Reactions of dihalogen barbituric acids

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CLINICAL TESTS.

Boutwell, Paul W., and Toepfer, Edward W.

Determination of sulphur in urine

Ind. Eng. Chem., Analyt. Edit., 4 (1932), 117

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 will also 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.

ADVERTISING AND SELLING PROBLEMS IN DRUG STORES.

Planning an Advertising Campaign.

The purpose of advertising is to create desire. In so far as retail drug stores are concerned, the purpose of advertising is to create, among customers and prospective customers, the desire to purchase the services and merchandise they have for sale. Stated in another way, this means that successful advertisements of drug stores must make the possession of the services and merchandise these stores have for sale seem more desirable than the money these services and merchandise cost.

Desire can be created in drug stores by personal salesmanship and by displays in the store and in the windows. Personal salesmanship in drug stores will be the subject of later articles in this series.

Creation and installation of displays which create desire was the subject of a series of nine articles of mine which appeared in the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION from August 1927 to April 1928.

The title of these articles is, "The Psychology of Effective Display." The use of the word "psychology" in that title should not frighten anybody. To many people psychology is a formidable and mysterious word. It should not have any such connotation. Psychology is the study of peoples' behavior. The late Dr. George A. Dorsey made a great contribution to the popular understanding of psychology in his book, "Why We Behave Like Human Beings."

What I tried to do in this series of articles on the Psychology of Effective Display was to take the recognized and accepted facts and principles about human behavior and indicate, with definite examples, the effective use of these principles and facts in the construction of displays which create desire for the merchandise and services shown. It is my sincere belief that a study of these facts and principles, as set down in this series of articles, will prove helpful to any druggist who wants to make the time, money and effort he puts into displays produce the greatest possible return for him.

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It is obvious, of course, that displays in a drug store and in its windows can influence directly only those people who enter the store or at least pass by it. It is necessary for many drug stores, particularly those located in communities of small size which draw their patronage from wide areas, to use additional means in order to create the desire among these people to visit their stores or visit them more often.

This involves necessarily the consideration of the external advertising media which can be successfully employed. Before beginning such a discussion, it is of the utmost importance to recognize immediately that the foundation of any successful attempts to create desire for services and merchandise sold in drug stores must be based upon honest services and fairly priced merchandise. Otherwise, continued efforts to advertise and create desire are built upon a wobbly and uncertain foundation which, sooner or later, must fail.

For drug stores located in the busiest shopping centers of the cities they serve, newspapers have proved, frequently, to be profitable means of advertising. This is especially true in communities under 25,000 population if these communities are served by daily, semi-weekly or weekly local newspapers which are carefully read and highly regarded.

The existence of such newspapers is not an assurance, however, that a drug store always can employ space in them for profitable advertising. The situation is analogous to a vacant lot in a desirable business center. The vacant lot merely presents an opportunity for profit. To realize this profit, it is necessary to erect upon the lot an improvement in the form of a store building suitable for the type of retail business to be conducted there.

Space in a widely read and highly regarded local newspaper is exactly similar in its value. The space itself has potential value but this value can be realized only when that space is effectively used to create desire for the services and merchandise described in the space.

This is a point which, regrettably, is frequently overlooked. I have seen in October in country weeklies advertisements of drug stores still hopefully proclaiming that now is the time to think about spring housecleaning.

Obviously such advertisers have not only failed to take fullest advantage of the opportunities created by newspaper space but, actually, by inappropriate advertising, have created the impression that the stores themselves are not alert and certainly are carelessly managed or such untimely advertising would not be used to represent them.

Successful newspaper advertising should not be undertaken without a definite and complete program carefully worked out in all its details in advance of the appearance of the first advertisement.

One of the greatest values that newspaper advertising can have results from its accumulative effects, just as one of the greatest values a drug store itself can have results from the accumulated good will expressing itself in the continued and satisfied patronage of a large number of customers.

To obtain this accumulative advantage of continuous advertising, it is necessary, therefore, for a complete program of advertisements to be planned in advance.

One of the most common forms of drug store advertising, although certainly not one of the most suitable or desirable, is the blatant announcement of greatly reduced prices on popular merchandise. The reason that advertising of this kind

is not as effective as other kinds of advertising is that it lacks originality. Every other store which sells similar merchandise can do the same thing.

Newspaper advertisements of cut prices, just as cut prices themselves, are widely used because this is a method of advertising which requires very little care and thought in its preparation. This apparent advantage is also its weakness, as I have indicated above, because the ease with which such an advertising plan can be initiated also means that the plan can be easily copied.

Advertisements which are distinctive and original are harder to plan but, once planned and executed, have far more selling power because of their originality and the difficulty with which they are successfully imitated. The difficulty of imitating them results, in considerable part, from the unwillingness of most competitors to devote to newspaper advertising any considerable amount of thought and care.

As I have said repeatedly in this series of articles, the one thing that distinguishes a drug store from all other stores is the fact that it is equipped and able to render professional services which no other retail store is licensed to perform.

Therefore if newspaper advertisements, based upon this distinctive feature of drug store service, are planned they are not and cannot be readily copied by all the many types of competitors drug stores face to-day.

Most druggists recognize this exclusive advantage of theirs. The problem is the effective statement of this advantage in newspaper advertisements.

All too often the execution results in an advertisement which is built around the familiar theme—"Prescriptions Carefully Compounded." Such a fact is taken for granted by drug store customers. *To advertise it really is dangerous because the inference is that prescriptions sometimes aren't carefully compounded.*

The same thing is true of another statement often made—"Prescription-filling is the most important part of our business." Even worse, is the statement—"No substitution here. You get exactly what your doctor ordered."

The successful advertisement of personal services of a drug store has, therefore, to be considerably more original than the worn and dangerous phraseology quoted above.

The most successful advertisements of this kind that I have seen are advertisements which steadily but surely impress upon customers and prospective customers the services of pharmacy in conserving and protecting public health.

Advertisements of this kind, if properly and carefully worded, emphasize, for instance, the importance of the wider use of the Schick test to determine whether or not children are immune from diphtheria. It is easy to see that an advertisement of this kind may be a distinct contribution to public health and safety. At the same time any pharmacist readily can see that such advertising is bound to create interest and good will among physicians and other professional people. It even is likely to result in increased sales by him of the serums necessary for the test.

The Dick test for scarlet fever furnishes an immediate interesting and profitable subject for newspaper advertisements of pharmacies. Other suitable subjects are the dangers of promiscuous use of laxatives and headache remedies. Certainly a rational advertisement which names a large number of the internal conditions of which persistent headache is the symptom, is a decided contribution to public health.

Other fields in which productive drug store advertisements can be written are insecticides and rodent poisons, veterinary medicine, including such subjects as pets, poultry and farm animals, horticultural supplies and other preparations for home and farm use.

The writing of advertisements for newspapers is a subject which requires considerable technical skill. Not all druggists have this skill. The remedy that is sometimes suggested is for a druggist, not personally experienced in advertisement writing, to hire somebody to do it for him. Theoretically, it is a good idea. Practically this idea doesn't work well in the preparation of drug store advertisements and this is the reason.

Experience has proved that it is unprofitable for a drug store to spend more than one and certainly no more than two per cent of its receipts for advertising. In a drug store with sales of \$25,000 a year, an appropriation of one per cent of its receipts for advertising thus would be \$250, or about \$20 a month. In other words, such a druggist has available to spend for all the costs of advertising, including the cost of the newspaper space and any incidental costs, a maximum of about \$20 a month. With four to twelve advertisements to prepare each month, it is manifestly impossible for a druggist to pay any competent person to write these advertisements for him and still keep the total costs of advertising within the limits indicated above.

That is why the problem of preparing productive newspaper advertisements rests upon the drug store proprietor himself. As a matter of fact, any druggist who can talk convincingly, can train himself to write advertisements which carry equal conviction. In later articles in this series, I plan to name and explain the most important technical problems in the preparation of productive drug store advertisements.

What I have been trying to emphasize in this article, with respect to newspaper advertising, is the necessity for the development of a continuous program of such advertising and the outlining of a series of suitable subjects in the execution of this program.

Sources of material for advertisements of the type which I have suggested above are obtainable, without cost, or at very small cost, from many of the life insurance companies, from state and local departments of public health and from the federal government. Departments of the federal government which distribute free, or at small cost, material about subjects suitable for use in drug store advertisements, include the United States Public Health Service, the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Commerce.

Another group of subjects for drug store newspaper advertisements is the announcement of new and unusual merchandise and services. Here the source of facts for use in the advertisements arises inevitably from the purchase of the merchandise. All the druggist needs to do in considering what he should say about new merchandise and services is to ask himself this question—Why did I buy this merchandise, or why am I installing this service? An answer to these questions inevitably must produce facts which can be used in the writing of productive advertisements about these new services and merchandise.

For instance, if a pharmacist decides to open a clinical laboratory for blood, urine and other analyses, his answers to the question—Why have I opened this

laboratory, must provide the subject matter for suitable advertisements, if his plan is sound.

The very familiarity which druggists enjoy with the great variety of substances which are to be found in their stores is apt to lead to the overlooking of interesting and convincing facts about these substances which could be used as subjects for newspaper advertisements. In order to obtain a perspective upon the usefulness, as well as the mystery and romance, which lies behind many of the preparations on drug store shelves, a reading or re-reading is recommended of books and articles on the history and development of pharmacy and related sciences.

Charles H. LaWall's book, "Four Thousand Years of Pharmacy," is an admirable summary of the subject in a form which is directly suggestive of subjects for newspaper advertisements about the services of pharmacy. A recent book edited by John C. Krantz, Jr., "Fighting Disease with Drugs," is packed full of similar stimulating thoughts and ideas.

In the next article in this series, I intend to outline the advantages and limitations of other advertising media which retail druggists can use in an effort to bring customers and prospective customers to their stores. Newspapers are mentioned first because in those instances in which the trading area of a drug store corresponds closely to the distribution of local newspapers, such newspapers have proved many times to be the most productive advertising medium for drug stores.



General view of prescription department Lascoff Pharmacy—looking toward front.