

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Conducted by Paul C. Olsen.*

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ADVERTISING AND SELLING PROBLEMS OF DRUG STORES.

COURTESY, TACT, PATIENCE AND SELF-CONTROL—FOUR ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES IN SUCCESSFUL DRUG STORE SALESMANSHIP.

BY PAUL C. OLSEN.

Half a dozen bottles of an aperient water to be delivered at once a half mile away is not the simplest order in the world to fill from a drug store. This is particularly true if immediate delivery is demanded and, especially so, when the demand comes from one of those pompous matrons who wants what she wants when she wants it—or, at least, thinks she does. It is useless to try to tell her that the delivery boy has just left for the wholesale house and won't be back for three-quarters of an hour and that you are alone in the store. It is hopeless, also, to try to make her understand that a half dozen bottles of Perrier water bulk considerably larger than the usual drug store delivery.

These are the conditions under which a drug store salesman has opportunity, if he will, for the exercise of four very important virtues which are characteristic of successful drug store salesmen. Real ability is required to be courteous and pleasant to a woman who states her wants in a tone she might use in talking to the garbage man. Not only is courtesy required, but also a degree of self-control comparable to that of the biblical Job.

The most natural thing to do is to give such a person a red-hot retort in kind. A druggist is not in business, however, to engage in sarcastic conversational exchanges with his customers. His business is to supply the merchandise his customers want in a way that will impress them so favorably that they will want to visit the store again.

Any drug store salesman who has had any experience at all can tell stories of shabbily dressed people who visit drug stores regularly and buy surprisingly large quantities of merchandise. It is a mistake for a salesman to think that he can tell by looking at him how much money a person has in his pocket.

I have seen a drug store salesman leave, without apology, a woman dressed in the style of 1907, who was on the point of buying several dollars worth of supplies for her first-aid cabinet, and rush over to a gaudily attired young woman who then spent fifteen minutes fingering the entire stock of lipsticks, trying to decide whether to buy a 25 or a 35-cent one. Meanwhile, the woman in the out-of-date clothes had left the store.

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