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PRINCIPLES *of* SELLING

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PRINCIPLES OF SELLING

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PREFACE

The reader, before he plunges into a book on selling, is entitled to a candid statement of the scope and purpose of the work. In the preface to the first edition of this text the author attempted to give such a statement, and the words of the earlier work may be repeated here, substantially as they were first set down.

This book is the outgrowth of the author's search for the basic principles of selling, a quest that began many years ago with the reading of Harrington Emerson's volume "The Twelve Principles of Efficiency." In the intervening decades experience as a salesman, as a teacher of salesmen, and as a sales counselor has served to strengthen the conviction that it ought to be possible to lay down a small number of foundation stones upon which to erect the structure of sales education.

There are, of course, many excellent books dealing with the principles of selling. In most of them, however, the term principle is taken to mean any generalization or fact about selling, and the average book contains hundreds of such generalizations. It would seem helpful to organize these numerous points under a few significant headings. Such is the chief aim of the present volume. In this book, principle has been used in a specific sense, meaning a guiding rule of sales conduct so universal as to be applicable in some degree to all selling. It is not claimed that the nine principles thus laid down in the text exhaust the list, but experience has shown that most of the important facts can be presented under this limited number of headings.

In writing a book on selling an author has several styles from which to choose. There is the inspirational school of

writing which deals expansively with formulas for quick success. There is the psychological school with its preoccupation with the motives and mental states of customer and salesman. There is the economic approach, picturing selling as a part of the great business of making and distributing goods. There is the personal-experience book, devoted to narratives of exceptional sales. There is the sociological presentation, appraising the social consequences of good and inefficient selling.

In the present book the author has not followed any of these approaches but has tried to borrow some of the good from all of them. No short cut to success is sought, but the aim is to discuss better methods of selling and to show how they can be acquired. The author has tried to write with an image of the aspiring student constantly in mind, to present in simple language a helpful analysis of a truly difficult subject.

It is perhaps only fair that the prospective reader should be warned that this book is of little interest to those who wish to practice what has been called high-pressure selling. The intent is to encourage initiative but not aggression.

In the revised edition a new chapter dealing with the buyer-seller relationship has been added. The discussion of the history of selling, which was entirely too brief in the first edition, has been much enlarged. A new chapter on the qualities of the effective salesman attempts to present some of the results of research in this field. In the introductory chapter and at various other points throughout the book fresh data have been presented.

The materials for this book have been drawn from many sources. Students and associates of the author have done much to influence the final form. Wherever possible the author has tried to give credit for ideas taken from others. Special obligation must be expressed to *Printers' Ink*, *Advertising and Selling*, and *Sales Management*. Material quoted directly from these useful journals has been carefully credited to the source, but it is certain that some

contributions have crept in without benefit of quotation marks.

To Mr. Walter Hausdorfer, librarian of the Columbia University School of Business, the author wishes to express appreciation of his unfailing helpfulness. Thanks are due those teachers, users of the first edition of this book, who made suggestions as to points that needed revision. Where conditions permitted, these suggestions have been followed.

H. K. NIXON.

NEW YORK,
June, 1942.

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PRINCIPLES OF SELLING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In our modern economic system vast amounts of time and energy are devoted to the marketing of goods and services. Marketing includes such tasks as sorting, grading, packing, storing, and transporting, as well as merchandising, advertising, and selling. It should, indeed, be understood to include all those numerous activities involved in the flow of goods and services from production to consumption. In this book we are concerned with but one phase of marketing, dealing primarily with those functions which are usually described as "personal selling."

As we shall see in the more detailed discussion to be given in the third chapter, popular usage attaches two very different meanings to our subject. When, for example, we say that stamps are sold at the post office, we refer to the exchange of money for the thing purchased. When, on the other hand, we say that a man was sold something that he did not wish to buy, we are making selling synonymous with persuasion. It is obvious that the emotional attitudes aroused by these two concepts are very different, and for this reason it is important that whenever we speak of selling, we take care to indicate clearly whether we are talking about economic exchange or the process of motivation. In this chapter we are interested in the first and broader view.

Types of Personal Selling.

In discussing personal selling it is frequently desirable to consider problems or methods that are peculiar to specific groups. It thus becomes necessary to make use of some system of classification whereby the characteristics of the various kinds of selling may be indicated.

In making such classifications, five methods of approach are in common use. The first of these considers *the purpose of the customer* in making the purchase. Under this heading we have (*a*) sales to customers who are buying for their own consumption, as in the instance of a housewife buying a cake of soap, and (*b*) sales to individuals who do not expect to consume the goods themselves but hope to profit by the transaction, as in the case of purchases by retail storekeepers, professional buyers, and purchasing agents.

A second way of classifying sales hinges on the question: *Who takes the initiative in the transaction?* Here we have (*a*) the situation in which the customer of his own volition approaches the salesman, as in most retail selling, and (*b*) the complementary type, in which the salesman goes to the buyer, as in selling house to house, office to office, or store to store.

A third classification is based upon an analysis of the individuals or organizations *to whom goods are sold.* Here we have (*a*) salesmen selling materials, partly finished goods, or supplies or equipment to manufacturers, institutions, and so forth; (*b*) salesmen selling produce or manufactured goods to wholesalers and institutional buyers; (*c*) salesmen selling to retailers; and (*d*) salesmen selling to ultimate consumers.

A fourth, and probably the most widely employed method of division, is in terms of the *organization for which the selling is done.* Here we have the familiar separation of wholesale, retail, and specialty selling. Specialties, as the term is generally used, are the products or services of individual organizations. Automobiles, insurance, and heavy installation machinery would thus be classified as specialties. A specialty shop, it may be noted, is a retail establishment selling a limited group of merchandise, such as hats or dresses.

A fifth mode of classification is in terms of the *type of goods or services* sold. Thus we sometimes find salesmen divided into two groups: those engaged in marketing tangible objects, such as refrigerators, and those selling intangible

services, such as insurance. Specific groups, such as machinery salesmen, security salesmen, real estate sales-

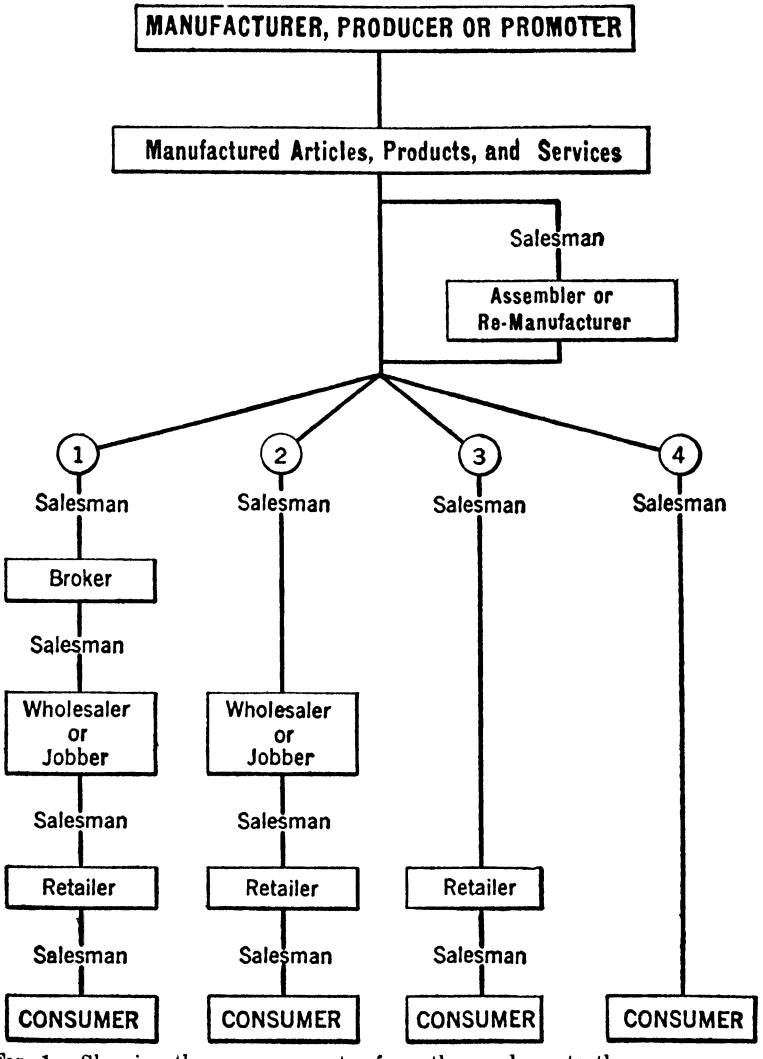

FIG. 1.—Showing the common routes from the producer to the consumer and the salesman's part in the marketing process.

men, are sometimes discussed, and it is obvious that the article sold is in such instances the basis of grouping.

Importance of Selling.

Measured in terms of money involved and of people employed, selling is today an important activity. Few individuals now produce for themselves more than a fraction of the goods required to satisfy their wants and needs. Most people exchange for money the goods that they themselves produce or the services that they render, and with the money thus secured they buy the things that they are not able or do not wish to make. Most of us participate in several such exchanges every day, either as buyers or as sellers, and the number of transactions taking place in a country such as the United States in a single year is obviously very great. It has been estimated, for example, that in a prosperous year finished goods valued at almost 66 billion dollars are sold to ultimate buyers in this country. Leading up to these final sales there are usually several transactions along the way; consequently, the total selling activity as measured in dollar volume must be several times this sum. By one estimate these aggregate sales may amount to nearly 210 billion dollars.[1] This total, moreover, applies only to tangible goods. In addition there are the numerous services, such as transportation, insurance, amusement, for which the annual expenditure is probably between 13 and 19 billion dollars.[2] It will be seen that the grand total of sales of all kinds must indeed represent an impressive amount.

Expenditures for Personal Selling.

Another indication of the role of selling in our economic life is to be found in the sums of money expended in connection with this form of business activity. It is impossible to secure accurate and detailed information on this point, but

[1] "Does Distribution Cost Too Much?" p. 64, The Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1939.

[2] ALEXANDER, RALPH S., *et al.*, "Marketing," p. 54, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1940.

by inference from the scattered data available, the cost of selling is evidently very large.

If, for example, we assume that wages and commissions paid to persons performing the selling function were only 3 per cent of the 210 billion dollars in sales mentioned in a preceding paragraph, this item of expense alone would be well over six billion, and it makes no provision for the cost of selling the various services, which was certainly considerable.

Or, to take another broad approach, we may attempt to estimate the number of individuals engaged in selling and their probable income in wages and commissions. Accurate data are hard to obtain, but on the basis of census reports it seems reasonable to assume that between four and six million people in the United States devote most of their working time to personal selling.[1] If on the average they receive $1,200 a year for this type of service, the annual pay roll is from five to seven billion dollars. All this is little more than a guess, but the error is probably in the direction of underestimate.

[1] The estimate of the number engaged in selling is derived as follows:

	Estimated Number (1939)
Manufacturers' salesmen	200,000
Wholesale salesmen	430,000
Retail salesmen and saleswomen	2,208,000
Retail-store proprietors	1,613,000

These estimates are based upon data from the 1939 Census of Business. To their total may be added the following from the 1940 Census of Occupations:

Insurance agents and brokers	239,142
Real estate agents and brokers	111,110
Canvassers, solicitors, hucksters, peddlers, news vendors	195,159

The Census of Occupations also reports 614,270 individuals under the heading "Other sales agents and brokers" and 1,745,593 as "Other salesmen and saleswomen." These two classifications, to an unknown degree, duplicate the data from the Census of Business as given above.

We may check these figures against data available in specific lines. In wholesale trade, according to the 1939 Census of Business,[1] 200,573 establishments achieved sales of $55,265,640,000. To take care of this volume it is estimated that they employed approximately 430,000 inside and outside salesmen. The data indicate that these men received on the average about $43 per week, or approximately $2,200 per year. It is therefore evident that the expenditure for personal selling was in the neighborhood of $950,000,000 for the year. If to this we add various other items of expense that were incurred in connection with the efforts of these men, we arrive at a total expenditure of considerably more than a billion dollars.

Retail-selling costs are likewise noteworthy. In 1939 it was reported that there were 1,770,355 retail stores with sales for the year of $42,041,790,000. These stores employed approximately 4,600,000 men and women, of whom 3,730,932 worked full time. Of these full-time employees about 48 per cent, or 1,790,800, were engaged in retail selling. On the average these individuals received about $1,000 per year for their services. This would mean that full-time salespeople in retail stores were paid not far from $1,790,900,000 in 1939. Wages paid to part-time employees engaged in sales work should be added to this sum, bringing the total to around two billion. This does not take into account the selling activities of the 1,613,673 proprietors of unincorporated retail businesses. The time that they spent in selling is hard to estimate, but we may arbitrarily value it at an additional billion dollars.[2]

To make a different approach, if on the average only 6 per cent of net retail sales went for the wages of salespeople, the

[1] "Wholesale Trade," Census of Business: 1939, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

[2] The foregoing calculations are based on data given in the volume "Retail Trade," Census of Business: 1939, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1940. The estimate of 48 per cent of full-time retail employees engaged in selling is from "Retail Distribution," Vol. V, Census of Business: 1935.

expenditure for this purpose in 1939 was about two and one-half billion,[1] an estimate that is certainly conservative. Borden[2] collected typical figures for selected retail trades and reported only one instance in which expenditures for personal selling represented less than 6 per cent of sales. For this purpose 8 or 9 per cent is more common. Thus we are apparently justified in concluding that the bill for retail selling is at least three billion dollars in a representative business year.

In addition to the amounts spent by wholesalers and retailers we have to consider the sales expense of manufacturers. In 1939 it was reported that there were in the United States 184,230 manufacturing establishments.[3] To distribute the goods produced required the services of 583,364 persons for whom salaries and wages totaled $1,052,755,302. Information at present available does not indicate how much of this sum was spent for personal selling. It seems safe to assume that more than half went for this purpose.

Finally, we must mention the numerous services. The Census of Business for 1939 listed 646,028 service establishments in the United States.[4] This did not include numerous organizations in the fields of finance, education, real estate, insurance, or transportation. It is clear that most of these require a certain amount of selling, although in many instances professional salesmen are not employed. Because conditions vary so widely, it is impossible to arrive at any accurate estimate of the amount actually spent for this purpose by service organizations. Perhaps an estimate

[1] According to the Census of Business, retail sales in 1939 were $42,041,790,000, as compared with $32,791,212,000 in 1935 and $48,329,652,000 in 1929.

[2] BORDEN, NEIL H., "The Economic Effects of Advertising," p. 63, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Chicago, 1942.

[3] Census of Manufactures: 1939, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

[4] "Service Establishments," Census of Business: 1939, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

of $500,000,000 annually would be justified, but there is little real basis for this guess.

Bringing together these estimates of expenditures we are led to conclude that in a representative business year personal selling in the United States involves costs of from five to eight billion dollars. A study by Borden[1] lends a certain amount of support to this assumption. After careful analysis he found that advertising expenditures for the year 1935 were in the neighborhood of $1,700,000,000. He assumed that the costs of all personal selling were several times this sum. This agrees fairly well with the figures that we have drawn from other sources and may be accepted as the best conclusion to be derived from existing data.

Economic and Social Importance of Selling.

Calculations such as the foregoing suggest merely that selling is important in material terms. Other social and economic values must also be considered. Obviously, an occupational group that includes so many people will by its very size have significance. If, in addition, we consider the fact that the salesman's activities affect the interests and welfare of every individual, our appreciation of this significance is redoubled.

It is a commonplace to say that we are living in an age of large-scale production in which the efficient distribution of the products of our machines is of vital importance. As we shall see in a later chapter, the increased use of machinery for producing goods has been paralleled by the increased use of salesmen in marketing them. That personal selling plays an important part in the process of distribution must be admitted by anyone who gives the matter serious consideration.

It is equally clear that the efficient conduct of selling is a matter of concern not only to employers but to all members of the community. The salesmen's salaries mentioned in preceding paragraphs enter into the total cost of goods and

[1] BORDEN, *op. cit.*

services and affect the prices that all of us must pay. Inefficiency at the point of sale is as costly to the consumer as is waste in production. It is the chief purpose of the chapters that follow to suggest ways of improving selling methods in order not only to benefit the individual salesman and the company for which he works but to make selling a more socially useful occupation.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELLING METHODS

Selling has been widely practiced since the beginning of recorded history. Through the long centuries millions of eager and ambitious men have devoted their lives to trade. Each made some effort, however feeble, to master the difficulties of his difficult vocation. Each left some impression, however small, on popular attitudes toward selling. It would be strange if a study of the activities of these men failed to reveal something of significance to the modern practitioner. With this thought in mind we shall in this chapter survey briefly the history of selling methods and of ideas about selling.

Selling in Ancient Times.

By the nature of things we cannot know much about the methods of the early traders. The historian has usually been interested in the more heroic activities of warriors and statesmen and kings and has had but little time for the humble merchant. Sometimes he casually mentions that at a certain period or in a certain city the trade in some specific commodity—spices, dyestuffs, salt, or metals—was important, but rarely has he given us any sympathetic and revealing picture of the seller's way of life. We must, perforce, depend mostly upon inference to give the background that we require.

Selling was certainly practiced very early in the earliest civilizations. Hoyt[1] suggests that the practice of exchange developed from the act of gift-giving, which is common among primitive peoples. With exchange established, the

[1] Hoyt, Elizabeth Ellis, "Primitive Trade, Its Psychology and Economics," Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1926.

progress from simple trade to the more complicated business of buying and selling as we know it was inevitable. Even prehistoric man in many places probably discovered the advantages arising from such a system and may have carried on a limited barter. The Egyptians, who in the dawn of history were erecting their monuments along the valley of the Nile and developing art and science to a remarkable degree, had tradespeople and itinerant merchants. Most of the other civilizations that developed at the eastern end of the Mediterranean practiced trade to a considerable extent, although in the early period they do not seem to have drawn too fine a line between getting goods by robbery and getting them by fair exchange. The Phoenicians are represented as having been somewhat quicker than others to recognize the advantages of peaceful methods. Tyre became a great mart, "whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth." By ships her venturesome middlemen traveled to distant ports to buy and sell. By caravans they made expeditions to far places.

Any attempt to characterize in a word or phrase the methods of these early disciples of commerce would be as unfair as a similar attempt to give a simple picture of the activities of all sellers today. The scattered comments that are made concerning them by historians are contradictory. The Greeks as pictured by Homer, for example, regarded the Phoenician merchant princes as despicable, crafty cheaters. A scene in the "Odyssey" reveals their methods. They are shown landing at Syria, where they remain for a year, displaying and hawking their cheap, trashy wares. They impudently push their way into the homes of the wealthy and dangle their bargains before the fascinated eyes of the womenfolk. The Greeks, like some individuals of modern times, did not care much for such aggressive methods. It may be noted, however, that the Greeks of that period were pirates and rather proud of it, and their contempt for the Phoenicians seems to have been based on

their conviction that it was more manly to take what they wanted than to waste time in the troublesome business of trading.

Undoubtedly all kinds of men tried their hands at selling in this early period. They experimented with various ways of conducting their affairs under the uncertain conditions that then prevailed. Probably those who survived and prospered were men of considerable initiative and daring and self-interest. Because of the hazards of transportation they must usually have had to travel with the goods that they had gone out to buy or the goods that they were taking out to sell. They do not seem to have delegated the task of buying and selling to agents or representatives, at least not to any great extent. Because goods were not well standardized and values were hard to determine, they probably spent much time in higgling. Frequently they must have been in mortal fear of their customers, and generally they must have believed that the interests of those with whom they dealt were foreign to their own. It is reasonable to suppose that for them the making of an immediate profit seemed more important than the establishing of permanent customers. Probably the code of ethics that they followed was neither much better nor much worse than that of the people with whom they had to do business.

Development of Selling in Greece.

At the outset the Greeks had a profound distaste for the conduct of trade. Piracy was easier; heroic dignity was incompatible with bargaining. Traders were usually foreigners and therefore were enemies. One of Homer's warriors was much insulted when mistaken for a merchant. Aristotle concluded that trading for gain was unnatural. Plato in his "Republic" assigned the conduct of retail trade to those who were weakest in body and unfitted for any other task. The people of Sparta were especially resistant to trade and traders. According to one story, Lycurgus had the money of Sparta made of iron, so heavy in propor-

tion to its value that both buyers and sellers were effectually discouraged.

In spite of these attitudes, the Greeks soon found themselves drifting away from that supposedly ideal state in which no one lived by trade. Retail shops were established; a merchant class appeared; and from some cities, notably from Athens, ships voyaged far and wide. Calhoun[1] declares that by the beginning of the fourth century B.C. the old contempt for selling had almost disappeared. He pictures the merchant adventurers who conducted the grain trade, for example, as dependable and respected men. These individuals went to various foreign ports and brought back cargoes of grain which they sold to retailers. Wholesale merchants were discouraged and seem to have been generally regarded as undesirable in ancient times.

The development of the Greek attitude toward selling illustrates a pattern that was to be repeated in succeeding centuries. At first a warlike agricultural population shows hatred of the foreign trader. Presently their way of life changes, and they find themselves engaged in the activity that they formerly despised. The old attitudes tend to persist, tinctured by a reluctant admiration for commercial success.

Selling in Ancient Rome.

In ancient Rome we find this sequence of developing attitudes illustrated even more clearly than in Greece. From the outset the Romans were fighters and conquerors, very conscious of their dignity. They were accustomed to command, to exact tribute, to confiscate the wealth of their defeated enemies. Their patrician habit of mastery was incompatible with the plebeian deference and importunity of the petty bargainer. The noble Roman could bring himself to trade, but only when it was on a grand scale and under circumstances that allowed the exercise of his preda-

[1] CALHOUN, GEORGE M., "The Business Life of Ancient Athens," University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1926.

tory impulses. This concept appears to have been best exemplified by the *negotiatores*. These men were traders and bankers. Through political connections they were able to practice widespread exploitation, especially among the frontier tribes. They were operating in Gaul before Caesar fought there with his legions.[1] At the height of Roman power they carried on their activities from one end of the empire to the other. Their unscrupulous methods caused them to be very thoroughly hated, and Mithridates is reported to have brought about the slaughter of 80,000 Italians because of the resistance to these speculators, tax farmers, and usurers. It should be clear from the foregoing that the *negotiatores* were not salesmen as we think of the term today. Perhaps in our time they are most nearly paralleled by the politician who uses the power of his office to sell equipment, supplies, insurance, and the like, to individuals and corporations dependent upon the good will of the government.

Some authors trace the origin of the traveling salesman to the period of the Roman empire.[2] We have noted that in early times it was customary for the merchant to journey with his goods, in order to protect them on the road. In the development of commerce there comes a time when this is no longer necessary or efficient. The Roman, we may believe, was not too averse to delegating to his trusted slave, to his son, or to a freeman who was willing to undertake the project the troublesome tasks of traveling and selling. This arrangement occasioned some legal difficulties, for it was contrary to the Roman idea of "nonrepresentation," that is, that a contract was effective only between the two parties (the buyer and the seller) who were directly concerned. Ways of handling this difficulty were devised, however, and there seems to have been considerable use of

[1] OLIVER, EDMUND HENRY, "Roman Economic Conditions," University of Toronto Library, 1907.

[2] BIDEAU, PIERRE, "Le voyageur de commerce," Université de Lausanne, 1935.

representatives. To the dignified Roman who wished to engage in the despised business of trade the expedient of letting others do the work for him must have seemed admirable. He had subordinates establish retail shops; he sent others to peddle his wares through the country districts; still others were in command of ships that made trading voyages. Sometimes the slaves who had been thus trained in selling achieved their freedom and set up in business for themselves. We may infer that this delegation of the selling function did not increase the Roman's respect for such activity.

The Mediaeval Period.

Following the decline of the power of Rome there was a long period of struggle and adjustment. The casual reader of the history of the so-called "Middle Ages" is left with a multitude of sharp yet confusing images. Against such a varied and distracting background it is our task to project the likenesses of the motley crew of sellers who sprang up everywhere to supply the goods and services of the times.

Of considerable importance in the marketing system of the Middle Ages were the peddlers. The conditions that prevailed over most of Europe were such as to encourage this form of distribution. Retail stores were not numerous, especially in the smaller town. Roads were generally poor. Consequently, people living at a distance from the larger centers found it hard to secure many small articles that were not easily made at home. At considerable risk to himself, the peddler—in England he was frequently called a chapman—undertook to bring these wares to rural dwellers. He penetrated to remote hamlets, bargaining with the rustic inhabitants and local gentry. Usually he traveled on foot, carrying his pack. His companions on the road were tinkers, wandering players, landless men engaged in various unsavory adventures. Travel was difficult; robbers constantly to be feared; customers likely to be hostile.

In appraising the relationship between the peddler and his customers, it is well to remember that he was almost everywhere regarded as a stranger and a foreigner, even if he did not come from a foreign country. Distrust of the alien is common even in modern times; in the mediaeval period it was still more prevalent. The peddler must have been constantly aware of this resistance, and he probably tried to meet it with cheerfulness and merriment. See, for example, the character of Autolycus in Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale." In order to survive, the peddler very likely had to be a man of courage and resourcefulness. He certainly was more widely traveled than were most of the people with whom he dealt, and he was probably more intelligent. Perhaps he secretly felt contempt for the slow-witted buyers of his merchandise. Under the circumstances it is not likely that he spent much time in worrying about the ethical problems inherent in selling.

Influence of Markets and Fairs on Selling Methods.

The Romans had experimented with the idea of holding periodic markets at which buyers and sellers came together to trade. Such a procedure has many desirable features and seems to have developed more or less spontaneously wherever men have progressed beyond a primitive economic system. During the Middle Ages conditions were such as to favor the establishment of regular markets, and they sprang up all over Europe. Fairs, which originally were mostly promoted in connection with religious festivals, also appeared. Since the influences of fairs and markets upon selling methods were somewhat similar, they may be treated together in our present discussion.

The significant fact in connection with these concourses of buyers and sellers is that trading took place under control, subject to rule and authority. Such control could not be exercised over the isolated sales of the peddlers or the bargaining of neighbors, and naturally there were many disputes and much cheating. Even the expedient of

requiring the deals to be made before witnesses was unsatisfactory. Day[1] remarks that in England the law requiring official witnesses to transactions led to the establishment of markets.

In the mediaeval period, markets and fairs were usually operated under the protection of a feudal lord, some religious organization, or a town. In return for such profits as might accrue through the control of the market, the management was under obligation to protect those who came to trade. This meant protection against robbery, against illicit competition, and against cheating. Market courts were held; disputes were settled; inspections of weights and measures were made; rules were enforced.

The general effect upon the seller of having to proceed under inspection and regulation was certainly salutary. His goal—that of making an immediate profit—was not greatly changed, but his method of operation was subject, virtually for the first time, to considerable social control. The benefits that he secured through the opportunity to carry on his bargaining with many buyers at one convenient location were so great as to counterbalance the restrictions.

As was to be expected, however, many sellers tried to secure the advantages of the market and at the same time to avoid the curbing effect of market rules. Some attempted forestalling, that is, selling goods before the market stalls were opened. Some worked out ingenious plans for deceiving buyers as to the quality of the goods. The peddler who set up a booth at the fair was not very different at heart from the peddler who roamed the countryside. His trickery, however, now brought him into conflict with authority.

The Gilds.

Cooperation and mutual aid are useful devices frequently adopted in human society, usually in the face of a common

[1] DAY, CLIVE, "A History of Commerce," 4th ed., p. 38, Longmans, Green and Company, New York, 1938.

enemy. Sellers, because of the essentially competitive nature of their vocation, are not especially noteworthy for such unified effort, but on some occasions they have been able to overcome the tendency to individualism. Thus in early times traders setting out for distant places banded together for protection. In the Middle Ages the merchants of cities such as Florence assembled their trading galleys in fleets, which fared forth to Britain and Flanders and other ports. Such cooperative effort probably had little influence on the actual selling methods employed. In the mediaeval organizations known as gilds, however, we do find a type of mutual aid that had very interesting consequences.

The gilds were local organizations of sellers. The town was the scene of their operation. Students are not in agreement as to their origins, and they probably came into being in various ways. Some may have been the outgrowth of social or religious societies. Perhaps some sprang up spontaneously, whereas others were in imitation of the gilds of other towns. They are usually classified as merchant gilds and craft gilds, but the craftsmen were sellers as well as makers and in some places belonged to the merchant organization. Each gild had a head man, the alderman, and a number of wardens or stewards elected by the members. In theory, individuals who did not belong to the gild in a town could not engage in retail trade in that town. Membership thus became a valuable privilege, to be secured by undergoing several years' training as an apprentice and as a journeyman and by the payment of fees.

Under the circumstances it is easy to guess that the gilds did not look with favor upon aggressive selling by members. There was obviously a limit to the quantity of a product that could be sold within the town. It seemed axiomatic that if one merchant sold more, some of his fellow members would have to sell less. They, of course, did not relish such an outcome. To meet the situation they could either retaliate by increasing their own selling effort, or they could use the power of the gild to restrain competition. Natur-

ally the latter was more appealing to most of the members, who probably had little skill in bargaining and little taste for it. The gilds devised a great number of regulations that served to handicap the overzealous. They established rules governing the quality of goods and, in some instances, the price. To discourage undue competition in purchasing, some gilds provided that any member who was present at a desirable deal might demand the privilege of participation. As to treatment of customers, the gilds frowned upon attempts to secure patronage through special service or attentiveness. It is said that in some places gildsmen were even forbidden to rise when a customer came into the shop.

The gild system of selling could operate only so long as the group was able to control local trade. Inevitably the local monopoly was dependent upon conditions in the surrounding economy—in the state and the nation and the world. If the gild system could have been expanded to cover all trade in every country, our ideas about selling would certainly be very different from what they are today. Such expansion was not possible, and the gilds gradually fell into decay. During the period of their power, however, they afforded partial realization of the dream of sellers. They showed how it was possible through the regulation of competition by competitors to give the seller ascendancy over the buyer, to reduce selling effort to a minimum.

Mediaeval Merchants.

In general the gilds favored direct selling, the maker or producer dealing face to face with the consumer. This method, however, was not practicable in carrying on trade with distant towns or foreign countries. To conduct this type of selling middlemen, usually called merchants, were necessary. During the mediaeval period there were many of these merchants, some of whom became very influential; a few became bankers for the nobility.

Most mediaeval merchants, at least in the early period, were, of necessity, travelers. Trading was chiefly between

municipalities, and powerful commercial communities arose, such as Venice and Florence and the cities of the Hanse League. From these centers merchants went out to visit other towns and fairs. Usually it was expedient for the merchants to travel in groups; and while they were away from home, they frequently lodged together in fortified houses. They were thus a kind of brotherhood, with rules of conduct that were, in some instances, quite definite and comprehensive.

Aside from these internal restrictions, the merchants of the Middle Ages were subject to external regulations that would today seem excessive. The towns, influenced by the gilds, imposed fees and established elaborate regulations. Feudal lords and religious organizations collected multitudinous tolls. Kings alternately encouraged and plundered the traders. We may suppose that the merchants, when opportunity arose, felt entirely justified in taking a tremendous profit to compensate for their pains.

Colonial Trade and Exploitation.

The Middle Ages may, for convenience, be said to have ended with the discovery of America in 1492. There was, however, no immediate break with mediaeval ideas of selling. In fact one ancient idea, that of the buyer's obligation to purchase only from approved sources, was of increasing importance, especially in colonial trade, and deserves special consideration.

For centuries, under the gild system, Europeans had been accustomed to think of the conduct of trade within a town or territory as a privilege, to be granted by the ruling power to one group of sellers, excluding all others. In England, for example, various trading groups, such as the Merchants of the Staple and the Merchants Adventurers, had carried on both import and export trade under such an arrangement. In the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries the system was much expanded and many companies were chartered to conduct exploration and to establish

colonies. Naturally, the trade of these colonies was to be controlled. Thus King James, in the first charter for the Virginia settlements granted in 1606, provided that the managers should have

> . . . Power and Authority to take and surprise, by all Ways and Means whatsoever, all and every Person and Persons, with their Ships, Vessels, Goods and other Furniture, which shall be found trafficking, into any Harbour or Harbours, Creek or Creeks, or Place, within the Limits or Precincts of the said several Colonies and Plantations, not being of the same Colony. . . .

unless a prescribed fee was paid.[1]

By a logical process the concept of the state control of colonial trade developed, a concept that played such an important part in the struggles that reached a climax in the eighteenth century. The political and economic influence of this concept has received ample recognition by the historians. The implications as to the attitude toward selling that was exemplified have not, however, been widely appreciated.

When a company was granted a charter to conduct trade within a territory, the potential customers were rarely consulted. It was as if a fisherman were granted a fishing license. The seller was expected, within prudent limits, to exploit his advantage, and it was assumed that the buyers would cooperate. It was their duty. Since the grant usually came from the king, buyers who sought to escape the course that had been marked out for them were clearly disloyal.

It is almost impossible for us, accustomed to modern conditions, to have any real appreciation of this view of the buyer-seller relationship. We can easily see, however, that such an arrangement inevitably fostered conflicts and evasions. The familiar story of the trade controversies of the colonial period need not be retold here. To be sure, many other factors were involved, but buyer resistance to

[1] MacDonald, William, "Documentary Source Book of American History, 1606–1899," p. 6, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1914.

attempted dominance by sellers was a fundamental element in the events leading up to the Revolution.

It should not be inferred that the War of Independence had any notable effect on the working philosophy of the ordinary seller. Although to the thoughtful, the war perhaps demonstrated that under certain conditions the exploitation theory of selling was short-sighted, this moral was too abstract and too incompatible with the exercise of the trader's natural tendency to aggression to be given consideration by the practical man. The device of basing seller ascendancy upon royal charter fell into disuse, but numerous other means for accomplishing the same end remained to be tried.

Selling Methods in the Colonial Period.

A brief description of the various types of selling practiced in colonial America will be useful as a background for our analysis of subsequent periods. The picture will have more meaning if we keep in mind two sets of conflicting factors. On the one hand was English tradition and the desire of the English to control trade. On the other hand was the unprecedented conditions to be encountered in a new country and the spirit of initiative and self-assertion of frontier businessmen, operating far from European control. As Kirkland[1] points out, the English had not included a colonial mercantile class in their plans for the new world. It was expected that English merchants would handle whatever trade was to be conducted. In Virginia and Maryland the conditions were favorable, and this program was nearly made a reality. Once a year ships came to these colonies for tobacco, sailing up the bays and rivers and stopping at the various plantations. English merchants accompanied the ships, bringing such merchandise as had been ordered the year before or that they thought would find a market. If a merchant did not choose to make the

[1] KIRKLAND, EDWARD C., "A History of American Economic Life," p. 122, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1939.

voyage himself, he employed the supercargo or the ship's captain to serve as his representative.

An obvious inconvenience was that this arrangement required trading for a whole year to be done in a few days. The merchants also found that they needed a permanent local representative to look after their interests, especially in the matter of collecting debts. To meet these difficulties, the merchants began to employ factors who had the power to act for their principals. Some of them set up warehouses and stores at various points. In general, however, they do not seem to have been very aggressive in selling. In fact, both the temper of the planters and the ascendant position of the merchants tended to discourage such initiative.

Some of the plantation owners also conducted trade, but in a genteel fashion. They had their own factors in England, to whom they sent their tobacco to be marketed. These factors purchased and shipped to the planters merchandise that had been ordered. Some of the planters had stores, from which they sold such goods as they did not need for their own use. They seem to have done this more as a favor to their neighbors than as a money-making enterprise. Hacker,[1] however, claims that the trading activities of many of the planters provided considerable income and that Washington in the 1770's spoke of himself as a merchant.

The New England Tradition.

Conditions were quite different in the New England colonies. There economic and social forces favored the development of a trading class. English ships, to be sure, brought English merchants and merchandise to the seaports, but the energetic inhabitants rather quickly built up a domestic and foreign trade of their own. Venturesome individuals traveled far into the interior to barter with the Indians. Peddlers sought out the settlers in the backwoods. In the small, scattered communities other traders

[1] HACKER, LOUIS M., "The Triumph of American Capitalism," Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1940.

established general stores. Along the coast hardy captains loaded their ships with whatever they thought that they could sell and sailed away to find markets. Epitomizing the activity of all of these men, a legendary character gradually appeared—the Yankee trader.

The influence of the Yankee tradition upon our ideas about selling and our attitude toward sellers can scarcely be exaggerated. No simple analysis can reveal all the reasons why this was true, but we probably touch on the significant elements when we say that among a clever and venturesome people those who were most shrewd and daring tended to find their way into commercial pursuits at a time when there was full opportunity for the dramatic exercise of their abilities. The stories of their exploits were repeated, with embellishments, by admiring observers and thus stirred others to emulation. Selling was thought of as a game that was not only profitable but exciting and amusing.

The American Peddlers.

The history of the New England peddlers well illustrates the process that we have just outlined. In the early period they were mostly young men,[1] and they must have been strong and resourceful, for no weakling could have endured the hardships to be encountered in traveling long distances in a thinly populated country. They carried packs of assorted "notions," including such things as buttons, razors, combs, scissors, pins, spoons, cotton goods, and perfume. Some specialized, selling single items, such as brooms, woodenware, clocks, pottery, and books. Kier[2] speaks of the unappreciated tin peddler and traces some great New England industries to his efforts. Other writers have noted that the peddlers played an important part in establishing the markets without which the home industries that pre-

[1] WRIGHT, RICHARDSON, "Hawkers and Walkers in Early America," J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1927.

[2] KIER, MALCOLM, "Manufacturing Industries in America," pp. 86*ff*., The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1920.

ceded the introduction of the factory system would have languished.

In general, however, attention has been directed less to the economic consequences of peddling than to the character of the methods employed. Timothy Dwight, writing in 1823, said of the peddler:

> . . . he wanders into the interior country; calls at every door on his way; and with an address, and pertinacity not easily resisted, compels no small number of the inhabitants to buy.[1]

He observed that many of these young men parted at an early age with both modesty and principle. Thomas Hamilton was even more outspoken. "The whole race of Yankee peddlers in particular are proverbial for dishonesty," he said.[2] Others describe various spectacular tricks, such as palming off basswood hams or wooden nutmegs or highly varnished but incompetent clocks.

The literal-minded reader of reports, such as the foregoing, may carry away a picture of the peddler as a lying, cheating outcast. This misses the point. Most people of the time, apparently, thought of him as a merry and impudent knave, but not as a sordid scoundrel. For the robust countrymen the amusement derived from recounting the tricks that the peddler played on a pious neighbor was more than compensation for the irritation experienced when they were themselves the victims of his cleverness.

Merchants and Trading Captains.

Another source of the Yankee trader tradition is to be found in the activities of the merchants and their representatives, the ship captains. Many of these merchants began as sailors, then became masters of their own vessels, finally settled down ashore, and sent others out with their ships and cargoes. They marketed fish in Spain and

[1] DWIGHT, TIMOTHY, "Travels in New England and New York," Baynes, London, 1823.

[2] Quoted by WRIGHT, *op. cit.*

Portugal, the Azores, and the Canary Islands. They sold lumber and furs and ships in England. They sent flour and grain, salt pork, fish, staves, heading, and sawed lumber to the West Indies. Some of them took part in the African slave trade. They handled rum and molasses and numerous other articles. Some of them, when they felt themselves hampered by English laws, indulged in smuggling.

Because of the conditions of the times these men were traders rather than mere freight handlers. A captain might be gone for months or even years on a voyage, stop at many ports, engage in many transactions, escape numerous perils, and return home with a fortune for the owners. It is easy to see how such epics of commerce could stir the imagination of New England youth. It is not hard to understand the wide popular appeal of the ideas and ideals of these successful traders.

The life of Timothy Dexter, a merchant of Newburyport, affords a good example of the process by which the New England trader philosophy was developed. Dexter was born near Boston in 1743. He served as an apprentice to a leather dealer, then entered business for himself. By various speculations he made a fortune. Because he was wealthy and also eccentric many stories were told about him, most of them dealing with hair-brained ventures that turned out to be exceedingly profitable. Probably the most widely publicized was his deal in warming pans. These pans were used to mitigate the rigors of the northern winter; and when Dexter included a large number of them in an assorted cargo that he was shipping to the West Indies, it seemed that he had made a ridiculous blunder. Dexter's biographer reports a fortunate outcome, however.

The captain, a young and ingenious man, finding this article in the invoice, set his Yankee talents to work to find a sale for them. He took off the covers and had handsome handles put to them, and called them skimmers, and the pan part, ladles. He then had them introduced into a large sugar-making establishment, and they were much approved of, as the best machines of their kind ever invented. Every sugar-maker

was anxious to obtain several sets for his establishment, and the whole was sold to great advantage.[1]

This story of trader initiative has survived for more than a century because of its strong appeal to sellers' motives. In it, through the legitimate use of cleverness, a seemingly impossible sale is accomplished. In it the merchant's desire for gain, the Yankee ingenuity, and the puritanical conscience are all satisfied. It would be hard to find a better illustration of the ideals that dominated selling in the United States in the nineteenth century.

The Rise of the Professional Salesman.

In every period that we have thus far discussed there were men who made the selling of goods their chief occupation. Few of them, however, were salesmen, in the sense that we now use the term. They are rather to be called traders or peddlers or merchants or selling agents or shopkeepers. Professional salesmen first became numerous and important in the nineteenth century.

The impetus for this development is to be found in what is generally called the Industrial Revolution, that vast change in industrial and commercial life that began in the latter half of the eighteenth century with the invention and utilization of numerous laborsaving machines. Heretofore most goods had been produced by hand, in relatively small quantities, to be sold at relatively high prices in limited markets. With the advent of machines, industry moved from rural cottages and workshops to urban factories. Goods were produced cheaply and in large quantities. To dispose of the increased production it was necessary to cover existing markets more intensively and to make energetic attempts to discover new outlets. The merchants, through whom goods were distributed, could not be counted upon to feel the same concern and enthusiasm as the factory owner. The manufacturers, especially of products that were not in

[1] KNAPP, SAMUEL L., "Life of Lord Timothy Dexter," J. E. Tilton and Company, Boston, 1858.

staple demand, began to take upon themselves the task of demand creation.

Under the new conditions the individual manufacturer was usually unable to handle the difficult and time-consuming task of selling the output of his factory. In some cases he employed selling agents. In other instances he hired energetic and aggressive men to do the selling for him, under his supervision. This procedure is well illustrated in England by the pioneer efforts of the manufacturers of Manchester, who as early as 1730 were sending out riders to all parts of the kingdom to push their wares. With the full development of the factory production system, the practice was much extended. An American observer gives the following picture of the commercial traveler in England in the year 1838.

> The commercial traveler is generally a young and a very shrewd individual, possessing great suavity of manner, and a remarkable ability to suit himself readily to all of the varied moods of his various customers. Furnished by his principals with choice samples of their goods, he steps into his chaise, or the stage, and with a light heart commences the circuit. At each town upon his route he tarries at the principal inn, where he is sure to find a hearty welcome. After thus ensconcing himself in comfortable quarters he arranges his samples, and if it be forenoon puts them under his arm and issues forth to visit the shopkeepers. Wherever he goes he is met with cordiality. Like all travelers he is full of anecdotes, and has at his command the rarest news of the time. None are more glad to see him than the shopkeepers' wives and daughters. To these he imparts the most recent scandal and the latest fashions, affording them subjects for gossip until his next visit to the town. To the tradesman he lauds his samples with all the eloquence and ingenuity of which he is capable, and seldom leaves without making considerable bargains.[1]

The Drummer

Selling agents and wholesale merchants also felt the pressure for market expansion and began to make more strenuous efforts to secure customers. It was the common

[1] From a letter dated 1838, quoted in an editorial in *The Office*, p. 153, August, 1888.

practice for country storekeepers to visit the larger commercial centers to purchase their stocks of goods. City merchants began to utilize agents to discover these buyers and to steer them to the sellers' places of business. In England these "hookers-in" appeared early in the nineteenth century and, according to Hotchkiss,[1] operated as independent salesmen, receiving a commission of 1 per cent of the value of the goods purchased. In the United States such salesmen were usually called drummers. A writer describes the situation in 1856 as follows:

> Many jobbers keep one or more young men as drummers at each of the principal hotels, while most of the employees of their establishments do more or less service of this sort. They watch for customers as a cunning animal does for his prey. . . . The country merchant is booked on his arrival, is captivated by courtesy, is attracted by appeals to each of his appetites and passions, is coaxed, decoyed, and finally ensnared or captured.[2]

Some of the drummers, seeking to anticipate the efforts of competitors, traveled out to the rural and less settled districts to solicit orders from the storekeepers in the intervals between buying trips. This practice was not especially common in the first half of the nineteenth century; but as the country became more settled, as means of transportation improved, and as the output of the factories increased, more and more of these traveling salesmen were employed. In the United States it became the custom to refer to all such travelers as drummers, whether they represented manufacturers or wholesale establishments. In the great period of expansion following the Civil War the drummers appeared in every town and hamlet. To their generation they were a romantic crew. In the backwoods and the frontier communities these strangers from the cities, with their urban polish, their black cigars, their doubtful morals,

[1] HOTCHKISS, GEORGE BURTON, "Milestones of Marketing," p. 156, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1938.

[2] FREEDLEY, EDWIN T., "Leading Pursuits and Leading Men: A Treatise on the Principal Trades and Manufactures of the United States," p. 156, Edward Young, Philadelphia, 1854.

their collection of piquant stories, and their persuasive manners, made a deep impression. Legends grew up about them. They came to stand in the public mind as symbolic of a certain type of selling—selling based upon personal appeals, entertainment, gifts, exploitation of passion and weakness. Like the Yankee traders, they captured the popular imagination, and many tried to emulate their methods.

Influence of the Country Store.

The influence of the general store upon ideas about selling deserves mention at this point. In the early colonial period in America goods were sold at retail on board ships as they lay at anchor and from warehouses on shore. Soon stores of goods were placed at trading posts for use in barter with the Indians and, as communities were established, for exchange with the settlers. Little of the merchandise sold in these pioneer stores was packaged or branded. The absence of fixed prices and the ease with which many products could be adulterated naturally encouraged sharp dealing, and the storekeepers were frequently accused of such practices as weighing out sand in the sugar, dust in the pepper, chicory in the coffee. P. T. Barnum, whose youthful experiences as a clerk in a country store apparently profoundly influenced his business philosophy, describes methods that were prevalent.

> Our cottons were sold for wool, our wool and cotton for silk and linen; in fact nearly everything was different from what it was represented. The customers cheated us in their fabrics; we cheated the customers with our goods. Each party expected to be cheated, if it was possible. Our eyes and not our ears had to be our masters. We must believe little that we saw and less that we heard.[1]

In appraising these pioneer methods it is well to note that the early merchant was, to a considerable degree, operating in a seller's market. In many communities there was but a

[1] Quoted by WERNER, M. R., "Barnum," p. 15, Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1923.

single store, whose proprietor enjoyed a virtual monopoly, for his patrons could not conveniently trade elsewhere. Many of the things that he sold were in great demand, and the supply was limited. Most important of all, many of the customers had products that they wished to exchange for the merchant's goods, and the store was the only convenient channel through which these products could be marketed. It is easy to see how all these factors conspired to encourage higgling and trickery and thus certain traditions of retail selling were established and persisted long after the growth of the country and changed economic and social conditions made such practices unprofitable.

Conditions after 1860.

In the census of 1860 we have the first general survey of the extent to which selling as a vocation was practiced in the United States. With succeeding decades the picture becomes clearer and the details more precise. A consideration of the information thus made available will help to underscore some of the points made in preceding paragraphs. The data are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SHOWING NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED IN IMPORTANT TYPES OF SELLING, 1860–1940*

Year	Peddlers and hucksters	Commercial travelers	Salesmen and saleswomen
1860	19,819		
1870	34,337	7,262	14,203
1880	53,491	28,158	32,279
1890	59,083	58,691	264,394
1900	76,649	92,919	611,139
1910	80,415	163,620	877,238
1920	50,402	179,320	1,125,782
1930	56,611	223,732	1,988,332
1940	48,357	.....	1,745,593

*Source: United States Census.

We may note first the peddlers and hucksters. It is evident that by 1860 this form of selling was no longer

especially necessary, and succeeding decades showed little real change. Comparison with data (not given in the table) as to the total number of individuals gainfully employed in the United States will emphasize this point. In 1860, census reports indicated slightly more than 8 million people gainfully employed. In 1940 there were well over 45 million, or more than five times as many. Peddlers and hucksters, by comparison, increased from slightly less than 20,000 in 1860 to over 80,000 in 1910 and then decreased to less than 50,000 in 1940, so that after 80 years their number was only about 2½ times as great as at the beginning of the period.

For commercial travelers the record is somewhat more impressive. They were not given a separate classification in the census of 1860, but by 1870 more than 7,000 of them were reported. By 1900 their number had increased to slightly less than 93,000, a rather rapid growth which reflects the importance of this method of selling in what was a period of commercial expansion. In 1930 slightly less than 224,000 were reported, or more than thirty times as many as in 1870. Data for 1940 are not available.

When we turn to the column labeled Salesmen and Saleswomen, we encounter the most arresting situation. From a mere 14,000 in 1870 their number increased rapidly to the astonishing total of 1,745,593 in 1940. It should be noted that these figures are somewhat misleading, for census enumerators frequently listed retail salespeople as "clerks," especially in the early part of the period covered. Because of this and other difficulties in classification, precision is impossible, but we may safely draw the general conclusions that as the country became settled and retail trade better established, there was a remarkable increase in the number of individuals employed. The trend is well illustrated by the increase in retail grocery stores, shown in Table 2.

Many other groups of salesmen remain for which the census gives partial or unsatisfactory information. Consequently, it is not possible to present a complete picture for

TABLE 2
APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF RETAIL GROCERY STORES IN THE UNITED STATES IN RELATION TO POPULATION, 1850–1935*

Year	Retail grocery stores†	Population	Population per store
1850	24,479	23,191,876	947
1860	40,070	31,443,321	785
1870	74,410	38,558,371	518
1880	101,849	50,155,783	492
1890	114,997	62,947,714	547
1900	156,470	75,994,575	486
1910	195,432	91,972,266	471
1920	239,236	105,710,620	442
1930	313,086	122,775,046	392
‡1935	354,971	127,172,000	358

* Large-scale Organization in the Food Industries, *Monograph* 35, Printed for the Use of the Temporary National Economic Committee, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., p. 75, 1940.

† United States Census, occupation reports. The occupational classification made by the census shows the number of managers and superintendents of grocery stores, which is roughly synonymous with the number of grocery stores.

‡ From 1935 United States Census of Distribution. Data include grocery and combination stores.

the whole field. We do know, however, that the number of individuals engaged in selling in almost every line increased rapidly as the United States developed.

The Quest for Better Methods of Selling.

The figures just presented and the survey of antecedent conditions given earlier in this chapter enable us to understand the quest for better selling methods that began in a small way as early as 1850 and assumed noteworthy proportions by 1900. As the country became more settled, as the introduction of the industrial system focused attention on the rapid distribution of great quantities of goods, as manufacturers and merchants found themselves obliged to employ large numbers of salespeople, and as speedier means of travel and communication favored the widespread dissemination of the fruits of individual experience, the development of the general interest in ways of increasing selling efficiency was inevitable. For the first time in the

long history of selling, the methods used in effecting a sale became a subject for intensive analysis.

The increase in books on sales methods tells this story in a dramatic fashion. The Library of Congress reports that one book on selling was published in 1869. In the period from 1870 to 1880 an additional book appeared. After 1900 the thin trickle began to increase and by 1930 had assumed the proportions of a flood.

Year	Books published on salesmanship*	Total
1869	1	1
1870 to 1880	1	2
1880 to 1890	3	5
1890 to 1900	6	11
1900 to 1910	36	47
1910 to 1920	220	267
1921 to 1930	294	561
1931 to 1940	325	886

*Quoted from STRONG, EDWARD K., JR., "Psychology of Selling and Advertising," p. 8, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1925. The 1920–1940 figures were furnished by the Library of Congress.

An early writer on the subject of selling was Arthur F. Sheldon, whose famous course was studied by many students. Other similar courses multiplied. Universities began giving instruction in the subject. Psychologists, noting the fascinating problems in human behavior involved in selling, contributed numerous books and articles and tests. Salesmanship became more scientific, in vocabulary if not in practice.

It is important to note that much of this literature, at least until recent years, was directed at a relatively small group of salesmen, those who represented special articles of equipment sold directly to users. Such manufacturers, far more than the makers of staple articles or the wholesalers and retailers who handle such articles of established demand, could appreciate the advantages of large-scale production and the dependence of this large-scale produc-

tion on expanded markets. For such special articles—business machines, automobiles, refrigerators, and the like—market development was most dependent upon energetic sales effort.

The story of a single company will provide a concrete illustration of the dynamic impact of this new idea of market extension through the use of trained salesmen. In 1884 John H. Patterson,[1] a retail coal dealer of Dayton, Ohio, purchased the controlling interest in a company that manufactured a crude cash register. There was practically no existing demand for this machine, and Patterson soon realized that it was easier to make his product than to sell it. He brought all the energies of a remarkably energetic personality to bear on this problem. From the outset he was exasperated by the inefficiency of the sales representatives. He constantly tried to discover the methods used by the more successful men and to induce the less successful to adopt these techniques. Soon he brought out a series of "Primers," designed to teach better selling. In 1894 he conducted what was probably the first school for salesmen. He also made use of inspirational meetings, demonstrations, conventions, contests, and special rewards for exceptional performance. His efforts were highly successful, and his dramatic example had a great influence, not only in his own field but in many related lines. Some of the men trained in his organization turned to the selling of other specialties, such as computing scales, adding machines, automobiles, and, later, refrigerators and similar equipment. Many of the books on selling written after 1900 were by men who had absorbed, either directly or at secondhand, something of Patterson's technique and theory.

Improvement of Retail Selling.

Patterson's methods were well suited to the sale of articles that had to be promoted in the face of considerable resist-

[1] JOHNSON, ROY W., and RUSSELL W. LYNCH, "The Sales Strategy of John H. Patterson," Dartnell Corp., Chicago, 1932.

ance on the part of the buyer. They were not so well adapted to selling at retail or for much wholesale selling.

In these fields the road to improvement was largely through finding ways of serving existing customers so satisfactorily that they would be impelled to continue their patronage. To this end the efforts of the individual salesman were of considerable importance, but store policy and organization were still more vital. On the side of policy, the maintenance of one price to all and the willingness to refund money to dissatisfied purchasers are good examples. As early as 1842 New York stores were advertising that they maintained a uniform price to all buyers of the same article. In 1865 John Wanamaker began offering to return the money if for any reason customers were dissatisfied. The influence of these two policies was tremendous. Soon practically every large store in the country was forced to follow suit. An immediate result was a decrease in the time spent in higgling, which had hitherto played a great part in retail transactions. The trend toward packaged and branded merchandise, which was especially marked after 1900, still further reduced the time devoted to consideration of goods by retail customers. The result was that the methods of promoting sales that Patterson and his followers had introduced in the field of specialty selling were less and less applicable in the retail store. The emphasis was shifted from urging people to buy to helping people to buy. What has been called the "service approach" became popular. It was seen that the chief problem in training retail salespeople was that of instilling the habits of courtesy and tact and attentiveness.

The Consumer Movement.

This survey of the history of selling methods and attitudes toward selling may properly be concluded by reference to what has generally been called the consumer movement. This movement had its inception in the period from 1925 to 1930 and was first heralded by the appearance

of several books such as that by Chase and Schlink.[1] These authors had been much impressed by the aggressive and unscrupulous methods employed by some sellers. They noted that consumer buyers were generally inefficient in their purchasing and seemed to be at a disadvantage in dealing with trained and persuasive sellers. They advocated more extensive dissemination of information about products by unbiased experts and legislation designed to curb aggressive practices. They favored greater cooperation among consumers and the establishment of a Department of the Consumer in the Federal government.

Similar ideas had been advocated previously, but never before in the United States had there been so determined an attempt to make consumers conscious of their special problems. The movement is significant to sellers because whatever the outcome may be in ensuing decades, it is certain that the social and economic results of the methods used in marketing goods and services will be subject to increasingly close scrutiny.

Questions and Exercises

1. Sketch in a few words the picture aroused in your mind by the word "salesman." Try to trace this picture back to its origin in your early experiences.

2. Discuss this question: Resolved, that it would be for the benefit of society for all salesmen to become twice as efficient as they are at present.

3. Why has the number of salesmen in the United States increased since 1860? Will it increase in the same ratio in the next 50 years?

4. Discuss this statement: He profits most who serves best.

5. Why do we hear very little about the drummer today? Has he disappeared or merely changed his name?

6. Express in a few words a philosophy of selling that you believe to be suited to present-day conditions.

Suggested Readings

BENNETT, CHARLES: "Scientific Salesmanship," Chaps. V and VI, American Efficiency Bureau, St. Louis, 1933.

DAY, CLIVE: "A History of Commerce," Longmans, Green and Company, New York, 1938.

[1] CHASE, STUART, and F. J. SCHLINK, "Your Money's Worth," The Macmillan Company, New York, 1927.

HOTCHKISS, GEORGE BURTON: "Milestones of Marketing," The Macmillan Company, New York, 1938.

RUSSELL, FREDERIC A., and FRANK HERMAN BEACH: "Textbook of Salesmanship," 3d ed., Chap. II, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1941.

TOSDAL, HARRY R.: "Principles of Personal Selling," Chap. I, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1926.

CHAPTER III

THE BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP

In the preceding chapter we considered the historical background of some of the widely practiced selling methods and of the development of attitudes toward selling. In this chapter we turn to a more detailed study of the buyer-seller relationship. Our purpose is to achieve a sympathetic understanding of the conflicts involved. Such understanding of psychological and economic factors is essential to intelligent conduct of our affairs, whether our interest is primarily in purchasing the things that we need or in influencing the purchases of others.

Ways of Acquiring Goods and Services.

Getting goods and services through exchange, usually of money, is such an everyday occurrence that it seems as natural as reading or writing or speaking. Actually it is, like these other activities, a learned performance. As with other acquired acts, the efficiency with which it is conducted in some measure serves as an index of the civilization of the individual or of the community.

The mental reactions involved in buying are easier to understand if we remember that it is adopted as an alternative to other methods of acquisition. These other methods are as follows:

1. Acquisition through appropriation from nature.
2. Acquisition through seizure of goods of others.
3. Acquisition through cultivation or manufacture.
4. Acquisition through gift or inheritance.
5. Acquisition through gambling.

The first of these, simple appropriation, is as old as life itself. Every living thing tends to take from the environ-

ment the things required for continued existence or for pleasure. Primitive man found fruit on the trees and took it. Or he captured wild animals and used their flesh and skins. Slowly, where nature did not provide at all times a plentiful supply, he learned to appropriate more than he needed in periods of abundance and to store his surplus.

From simple appropriation it was but a short step to the seizure of the stores of food or equipment gathered by others. The first experiments along this line may have been the plundering of the collections made by bees and by some animals. From that, man went on to the looting of the goods of other individuals, of other tribes, or of other nations.

It was discovered, however, that appropriation and seizure had serious limitations. Sometimes the object desired was out of reach or was perishable or was guarded by a strong and determined possessor. Somewhat reluctantly, probably, man turned to a third expedient, that of herding or growing or making the things that he wanted. He collected and cared for cattle, which supplied many of the things he required. Or he learned to plant and tend and reap and thus developed stores. He also experimented with the use of tools and found ways of making for himself many articles that would not otherwise have been available.

Very early in his explorations man discovered a fourth, and very pleasant, way of acquiring things. This was through gift or inheritance. Unfortunately the continued operation on this basis depends upon the willingness and ability of the giver to continue his benefactions. It is obvious even to the most amateur economist that no society in which everyone depends upon charity can long continue. This stern reality has hindered but not suppressed man's natural tendency to live on the bounty of others and to feel hurt and angry when those who possess a store of desirable goods fail to share their wealth.

A fifth method of acquisition is through gambling. This practice is certainly very ancient in its origins. It is to be

assumed that early contests in which the winner took or received a prize developed into systematized games of chance or skill on which men wagered. The satisfactions possible through gambling are obvious; to the prudent the possible dissatisfactions are equally apparent—and more impressive. The element of uncertainty inherent in gambling precluded the universal adoption of this method of getting goods.

The Development of Exchange.

A significant point of similarity in the five methods of acquisition just enumerated is that they are one-way transactions. The recipient does not pay for what he gets. The man who wins in a game or receives an inheritance or finds a treasure or appropriates the goods of a less powerful neighbor is likely to feel that he is getting something for nothing. He may, to be sure, expend effort when he tills the ground or labors to carry home the booty from a successful foray or even when he reaches out his hand to pluck the ripe fruit or to rake in his winnings. But in none of these situations is he faced by the necessity of giving up something that he values in order to secure another object for which he has a greater want. This adjustment is a striking characteristic of a sixth method of acquisition, which is called exchange.

Exchange occurs when individuals possessing articles desired by others voluntarily relinquish them on the condition that preferred goods or services shall be received in return. At least two persons are always involved in exchange, and each must possess something of value that he is willing to trade. This basic concept is, of course, relatively simple; consequently, the physical act of exchange can be practiced by men of mediocre intelligence and limited civilization once they have been introduced to the idea. Although exchange is to a considerable degree a forced alternative, adopted because wished-for goods or services cannot readily be secured by other means, its

convenience is apparent to anyone who considers the matter. The difficulty is in getting the process started. As Hoyt[1] has pointed out, man has no "natural disposition" to barter. He has to learn to trade. Some primitive groups hit upon the expedient for themselves. Their neighbors tend to be influenced by the example thus set. Hoyt remarks that when a nontrading and a trading people meet, it is the former who adopt the methods of the latter. Thus gradually, men the world over have by practice managed to develop considerable skill in the conduct of exchange.

Initiative in Exchange.

The physical process of exchange, as we have said, is relatively simple. The psychological aspects present far greater complexity. A multiplicity of reactions, including the process of valuation, comparison, deliberation, choice, and decision, may take place during a transaction. The persons carrying on the deal need not realize the precise nature of their own mental states, just as they perform many other learned acts without stopping to consider the psychological background. When, however, we attempt the study of economic behavior, we have to consider what goes on in the minds of buyers and sellers and are forced to an appreciation of the baffling web of reactions involved.

For the present discussion, the human adjustments necessary to the *initiation* and *prosecution* of exchange are of most immediate significance. Trading, like many other relationships, can occur only when the participants have arrived at the point of readiness. In some few instances it may happen that both individuals simultaneously experience the impulse to exchange and in perfect unison pass through the various stages leading up to the final act of transfer of ownership, without either exerting any influence on the conduct of the other. Such perfect harmony of

[1] HOYT, ELIZABETH ELLIS, "Primitive Trade, Its Psychology and Economics," Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1926.

adjustment, however, is necessarily rare. For one thing, the two individuals who are desirous of trading may not be at the same place, and one must seek the other. This person may be called the initiator. Then, the two being brought together, one must take the lead by making an offer, which the other accepts or rejects. The one advancing the proposal may be called the proposer. Finally, one of the traders may be slow and hesitant, and the other may attempt to hasten a decision by urging the desirability of the exchange. He must be called the persuader.

The person who assumes the initiative in making the offer and in urging its acceptance is customarily referred to as the seller, and the other party to the exchange is called the buyer. The terms are somewhat unfortunate, inasmuch as popular usage also tends to label the person who gives money for goods as the buyer and the one who gives goods for money as the seller. Since the man who is exchanging goods for money may or may not initiate the transaction, confusion may result. When, for example, it is said that a farmer has sold his farm, the statement would probably convey to most people merely the idea that he has exchanged it for money. If, on the other hand, it is said that an insurance agent has sold a policy, the statement is likely to suggest that he has been active in seeking a prospective buyer and in exercising the arts of persuasion.

Attitudes toward Selling.

This popular confusion in the use of the word accompanies a confusion in attitudes toward selling. The act of exchange is generally accepted as socially and economically desirable. The exercise of initiative in effecting exchange, especially if persuasion is involved, is not always thus approved. No criticism is implied, for example, when it is stated that a farmer has sold his farm. But to say that a real estate salesman has sold a plot of ground may arouse in some people an unpleasant set of associations. They feel that it is somehow bad to "sell" things, that is, to exert

effort toward making a deal. A modern writer on the economics of consumption,[1] for instance, lists absence of pressure to buy as one of the elements of a satisfactory market. Many books in discussing the problems of consumers are extremely critical of both advertising and personal salesmanship.

This resistance to selling arises from several sources. Some of it possibly has its obscure origin in a childish resentment at the unpleasant necessity of giving up something of value in order to receive something desired in exchange. Another contributing factor is the mass of unpleasant associations that have been woven around the idea of selling by the activities of unscrupulous traders in the past. A third, and perhaps the most powerful, factor is the human tendency to resist attempted dominance by others, especially by those felt to be inferior.

The consolidation of these negative attitudes is facilitated by the appearance of group consciousness among buyers and sellers. To a considerable extent such grouping is unrealistic; for in every transaction each party both "buys" and "sells" something, and everyone, unless he makes use of some of the five methods of acquisition listed earlier, must sell goods or services in order to be able to buy what he wants. Most people, however, find it hard to think of themselves as sellers, whom they are likely to regard as constituting a distinct class.

There is, of course, a complementary tendency for those who are much occupied in exchanging goods for money to develop attitudes consistent with the seller's position. The fact that they are usually trading to make profits rather than to secure objects for immediate enjoyment exerts a pronounced influence on their point of view. The consummation of deals becomes an end in itself, not an incidental as it is with those who purchase goods for consumption. In addition, the sellers, dealing with many

[1] REID, MARGARET G., "Consumers and the Market," p. 47, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1939.

buyers, are likely to become skillful in trading and to expend effort in improving their methods. All this tends to emphasize the incompatibility of their interests and those of their customers.

Mental Conflicts of Buyers and Sellers.

We have, then, certain individuals who are [illegible] occupied with exchange and who think of themselves as sellers. We have others not thus occupied who think of themselves as buyers. The attitude of each group toward the other is ambivalent; that is, they are both attracted and repelled, friendly and hostile. Writers on the subject have frequently been confused on this point, some insisting, as does Reid,[1] that the interests of the two groups are in inevitable opposition and others denying, as does Widener,[2] that any serious divergence exists or is necessary. The truth is that both buyers and sellers realize, however vaguely, their dependence upon each other and they feel, usually more acutely, certain elements of hostility. The result, within the individual, is a kind of mental conflict.

The buyer's dilemma arises because he wants the goods and services and at the same time he wants to avoid the discomforts incident to getting them by exchange. His reaction to the problem thus presented may be somewhat complicated by the realization that he is himself a seller, or dependent upon the sales efforts of relatives or of the corporation for which he works. In most instances he is probably not very clear in his appraisal of the situation or logical in his ultimate attitude. In general he is likely to find his mode of adjustment among the following alternatives:

1. He may try to evade the exchange system by stealing the goods that he wants.

2. He may scold and complain and take pleasure in reciting the evil deeds of sellers.

[1] *Op. cit.*

[2] WIDENER, H. W., Marketing Rewritten from the Consumer's Point of View, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Part 2, p. 124, April, 1940.

3. He may work to establish some system in which exchange as we know it is eliminated and each person contributes to a common pool according to his abilities and draws from it according to his needs.

4. He may seek laws designed to restrict the aggressive efforts of sellers.

5. He may seek to harass or intimidate individual sellers against whom he feels that he has a grievance.

6. He may erect barriers between himself and sellers and avoid contact with aggressive sales efforts as much as possible.

7. He may seek to improve his efficiency as a buyer, in order that he may offset the skill of sellers.

8. He may repress any irritation that he may feel against sellers and conduct his buying with the least possible friction.

There is no quantitative measure at present of the extent to which these various adjustments are prevalent. In recent years the "consumer movement," which was mentioned in the last chapter, has been a means of crystallizing the attitudes of some individuals, has dramatized the unscrupulous methods of some sellers, has focused attention on the education of buyers, and has had an effect on legislation. In spite of these activities most buyers probably practice the last of the adjustments just listed. They may experience momentary irritations, which are quickly pushed out of consciousness, if not forgotten. Only in periods of business depression, when incited by the vehemence of their partisans, are they aroused to such activities as boycotts, demonstrations, and legislative pressure.

The Seller's Mental Conflict.

The seller is also the victim of a struggle between two sets of antagonistic motives. As in all instances of mental conflict, one set of urges is positive, driving the individual toward a certain goal; while the other set is negative, restraining him.

On the positive side we have those impulses which move the seller to make sales. In this connection it is the fashion to speak of the profit motive. The term is, of course, an oversimplification of what is certainly a com-

plicated group of motives. Sellers obviously do desire to make profits; by the very nature of the competitive system those who are not capable of experiencing and responding to this desire lose out in the struggle. Profit alone, however, supplies but a portion of the seller's drive. Imitation and emulation of other sellers plays a part. If the individual is employed as a salesman working for a company, he may also be subject to stimulation by all the devices of aggressive sales management. Contests, bonuses, quotas spur him on. Selling becomes a game, to be played with zest and enthusiasm, emotionally satisfying as well as financially profitable. Buyers are pursued with much the same spirit as that in which the hunter stalks his prey or the fisherman angles for the wily trout. From the point of view of society, these motives are predatory, although not always consciously or meanly so.

In most sellers the predatory impulses are in some degree inhibited by motives that appear in consciousness as fears. There is, for example, fear of the social disapproval that is usually experienced by those who strive ruthlessly for self-aggrandizement at the expense of others. There is the more immediate fear of the punishment meted out to those who violate the laws that apply to the conduct of trade. There is the fear of loss of sales that may result if the resentment of buyers is aroused by unscrupulous or aggressive tactics.

It will be seen that these opposing complexes of motives are not sharply defined unities but are rather vague and hard to analyze. Consequently, the mental conflict resulting from their opposition has little of the dramatic quality that makes physical combat exciting. The individual seller usually passes through his moments of struggle and arrives at his adjustments without realizing what has happened to him and that what has happened is important. He makes a reaction, and with repetition this preferred response becomes habitual. Thus permanent selling methods are established almost unconsciously and with less deliberation

than is customarily given to the selection of an article of dress or a dinner menu.

It is not possible to present any simple classification that will embrace all the multitude of sellers whose personalities range from the extremely predatory to the nonpredatory and who operate under conditions favoring widely varying degrees of aggressiveness. A few examples of specific reactions will, however, illustrate the nature of the individual adaptations. Consider the case of a strongly predatory seller engaged in presenting an article of infrequent purchase to weak and unsophisticated buyers. He will, in all probability, adopt methods that are just safely within the letter of the laws governing transactions of the type with which he is concerned. Whatever mental conflict he may experience will arise from his dislike of social disapproval. To lessen his mental tension he may resort to various defensive and aggressive expedients. Commonly he will try to justify his methods by excuses. He may say that he is forced by competition to employ aggressive tactics. He may project the blame and declare that the ignorance and gullibility and selfishness of buyers makes them fair prey and that every man must look out for his own interests. He may try to convince everyone, including himself, that the sales effected by questionable methods are really for the benefit of the exploited. He may seek to neutralize criticism by ostentatious charity and lavish gifts. He may strive to dazzle others by the apparent magnitude and financial success of his operations. He may take the attitude that cheating the unwary is a huge practical joke. Or he may maintain an air of righteousness and assert that critics are merely giving vent to jealousy.

To balance the foregoing, let us consider the situation of the honest and socially motivated seller who finds himself in a field in which lack of aggression places him at a disadvantage. His conflict arises because his legitimate desire for profit is frustrated. In this dilemma he can withdraw

entirely from the field of selling, or he can shift to some other type of selling for which he is better fitted, or he can apply himself more aggressively to his present work, or he can continue his unsatisfactory course. He is likely to follow the third avenue and to institute a quest for methods of increasing his effectiveness that do not do violence to his conscience. He will drive himself to work harder. He may seek to improve his "personality." He may turn to books and courses that promise to show him how to influence people. He hopes always for some magic formula by which he may work his will with others without their resenting it.

These two examples give some hint of the nature of the seller's problem. The critic can readily detect the logical inconsistency of some of the solutions arrived at by the perplexed actors in the drama, just as one can detect the emotional bias in the adjustments of some buyers. Little is gained, however, by such destructive criticism. It is better to attempt to give both buyers and sellers a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties that both experience in the practical operation of the exchange system and to help them to discover for themselves what each must do in order to keep the system working.

Economic Theory and the Seller.

Pursuing this line of thought, we turn to what the salesman does and the desirability of his activities from the economic point of view. By way of introduction we must review briefly the advantages of trade.

That exchange enables the individual to maximize his satisfactions is rather obvious, but the principle may well be here restated. We start with the familiar fact of diminishing utility to the individual of successive units of goods. Suppose, for example, that a farmer has an apple orchard yielding so bountifully that he has more fruit than he can use or store for future use. A portion of his crop has little utility for him. If, now, his neighbor has a surplus of

wheat but no apples and will make an exchange, there is a clear gain in satisfaction for both individuals. As Moriarty puts it, "the trading process is thus seen to have created new value and by this creation of new value to have given a profit to both parties to the exchange."[1]

The implication in the illustration as just given was that the exchange occurred spontaneously and that the two individuals contributed equally to the value-creating process. In actual practice one individual usually takes the initiative in approaching the other and in proposing the deal. Without this work on his part—and it is work—the transaction would not have been made. Such work is therefore value producing.

Let us now consider a variation in the situation. Suppose that the farmer who has the surplus of apples also has a sufficient supply of wheat, so apparently he has no strong motive for acquiring more of either commodity. It may happen, however, that he is confident of finding a third individual who will trade something else, such as wool, for the wheat. He therefore exchanges some of his apples for the grain and then expends effort in finding a wool grower who can be induced to barter. He is successful, and as a result his activities as a middleman have increased the total satisfaction of himself and of his two neighbors.

The situation is no different if our enterprising farmer trades some of his commodities for money and with this money sets himself up in the business of promoting exchanges. In his new role of merchant he creates values just as surely as he did when he labored to produce a crop. In addition to his contribution by the process just described, he creates place and time utilities by bringing goods to his buyers at a convenient spot and by making these goods available at the moment when the want for them is greatest.

[1] MORIARTY, W. D., "The Economics of Marketing and Advertising," p. 295, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1923.

The seller also creates value when he gives information that enables the buyer to get more satisfaction from a good. To take a modern example, the automobile salesman who points out to his prospective customer a new and desirable feature of the car adds value just as surely as did the man who built and devised the improvement; for until the labor of conveying the information has been performed, the purchaser is not in a position to appreciate the possibility of increased satisfaction. Under present-day conditions, with many manufactured products yielding complex and unexpected values to the informed, the seller's role as an educator is of considerable importance, a fact sometimes forgotten by those who think of the "market" as a place at which products familiar to everyone—cotton, corn, potatoes, and the like—are exchanged.

Persuasion and Value.

We now come to the troublesome problem of persuasion. The information given to the buyer by the seller is generally to some extent persuasive, in that it leads to the perception of values not previously appreciated and thus moves the customer to buy. The salesman may, and frequently does, go much further in his attempt to motivate a prospective purchaser. To take a single illustration, an insurance agent, in addition to giving facts about the services of his company, may seek to influence by presenting a vivid picture of the possible suffering to be experienced by the individual's family in the event of his sudden death. Such tactics may be defended on the basis of social desirability of the protection afforded by insurance, but we are not here concerned with that aspect of the situation. The problem is whether or not the salesman who employs such methods renders an economic service. The answer must be that he does so if, as a result of his efforts, the buyer realizes a want to care for the family and the utility of insurance in satisfying that want. The fact that the want was dormant

until the salesman brought it into activity by his persuasive appeal is irrelevant.

A difficulty arises, however, from the fact that the individual has many wants and cannot satisfy all of them. The prospective buyer of insurance, for example, may have a strong want for a new automobile. The latter desire may for the moment have diverted his attention from his wish to provide for the future of his family. When the insurance agent brings this neglected want into consciousness, a mental struggle may ensue. This clash of motives may be exceedingly uncomfortable. The man feels frustrated and perhaps experiences a strong irritation, which is directed, not at himself, but at the agent who has thus disturbed the equilibrium of his impulses. To rationalize his anger he may say, and perhaps believe, that he does not want insurance. Thus, as a result of the seller's effort the buyer may actually come to attach less value to the product or service. In such instances selling is clearly unproductive. The salesman who, by persistence, overaggressiveness, or unwise persuasion, arouses irritation not only loses an opportunity to profit but does an economic injury to the prospective buyer by causing him to reject a want-satisfying product or service.

There is another circumstance in which the salesman may render an economic disservice. If, when the buyer is weighing the possible want-satisfying elements in a proposed purchase, the salesman distracts his attention from undesirable features and hurries him to the point that he makes an ill-considered decision, any value that the salesman may have added to the goods by his efforts is canceled by the devaluation that is likely to occur when the buyer later discovers that he has made a mistake.

A somewhat similar situation arises when the buyer, motivated by a strong but misguided impulse, approaches a seller and attempts to make a purchase that is clearly unwise. As a hypothetical case, suppose that a vain woman is seized by the desire for a piece of jewelry that she

cannot afford. Would the jeweler who, knowing the circumstances, yields to her importunities and sells the bauble be a creator of economic value? Disregarding the question of the social desirability or undesirability of his act, we must conclude that by his efforts in making the jewelry available he enables the woman to enjoy a great satisfaction but by his acquiescence in the bargain he makes possible the later devaluation that will occur when the woman realizes that her foolish impulse has led her to acquire an article whose want-satisfying power is great but transitory.

By way of conclusion we may lay down two generalizations that, if kept constantly in mind, will do much to clarify our thinking on the subject. The first is that every seller influences every buyer with whom he deals and every buyer influences every seller. The validity of this statement may not be immediately apparent, but an example will illustrate the point. To take an extreme case, even the man who sells by the use of a vending machine influences customers by the location, the color, and the construction of the device that he uses; and every person who buys or refrains from buying from such a machine produces an effort, however indirect and remote, on the seller's decisions as to the conduct of his business.

A second generalization, implied in much that has been said in the preceding paragraphs, is that the seller's influence (and that of the buyer too) ranges from that produced by the most obscure suggestion to that resulting from the most convincing argument or emotion-arousing appeal.

If these two statements are true, there can be no debate as to whether or not buyers and sellers *should* influence each other; they do so, and that is the end of the matter. The situation cannot be otherwise in a system based on exchange. The only question that can be raised has to do with the kind and amount of influence that may properly be used. For the seller the problem is to determine how much pressure he may profitably employ. For the economist the

question has to do with the point at which the seller's effort ceases to add value to the goods and services that are offered.

Social Considerations.

Several of the illustrations just presented suggest social considerations that were temporarily disregarded in order to give full attention to the economic factors. We now return to these problems. Was it right for the insurance agent to use an emotional appeal in selling his policy? Should the jeweler have sold to the woman who could not afford to buy? Ought the seller to require that all buyers pay the same price for similar goods? Is it wrong to trade in order to make a profit? Should money be refunded to the purchaser whenever he gets tired of an article that he has purchased? Should the bad features of a product be pointed out by the salesman? Since questions such as these involve moral issues, they can be answered only by reference to social standards. As we shall see, such social standards with regard to selling are still in the process of formation.

When exchange takes place between individuals of equal knowledge and of equal skill in bargaining, popular judgment would probably hold that society need not concern itself with the transaction so long as the goods or services involved do not menace the public health or morals or affect the public welfare. When, however, either party to the deal is seen to be at a marked disadvantage, it has generally been felt that exchange ceases to be a purely private matter.

The most obvious evidence of this conviction is the multitude of laws and regulations that during the long history of economic life have been set up to govern the conduct of trade. Usually the aim has been to curb the aggression of the seller in order to afford protection to the buyer. The young and the mentally incompetent are not to be exploited; the gullible and ignorant are not to be made the victims of misrepresentation; the timid and the weak are not to be induced to buy through the use of threats or force.

Less concrete than laws but of great practical importance is the mass of tradition regarding good and bad methods of selling. Wherever trade is established, a code governing its conduct quickly appears and exerts considerable influence. Among primitive tribes, for example, the giving of gifts is frequently considered a proper prelude to barter. If the trader fails to observe this formality, he arouses resentment and loses patronage. To continue in business he must conform to the established custom.

In the same manner modern sellers are forced to observe numerous conventions. Every branch of marketing affords specific illustrations. Thus in some cases it is normal for the seller to approach the buyer; in others it is considered almost criminal for him to do so. Sometimes a certain amount of higgling over terms is expected to take place; in other fields a customary price prevails. Certain articles, such as women's shoes, are traditionally sold by men, and any change from the mode is met with resistance. Wholesale establishments are not expected to cater to retail customers. Department stores are practically forced to provide expensive special services, along with the merchandise. Similar examples of the manner in which trade practices are binding on sellers might be multiplied.

The salesman, whether he likes it or not, has to carry on his activities within the limitations imposed by this maze of laws and customs. His judgment as to the right thing to do in a given circumstance must be influenced by social considerations as well as by the possibilities of profit. His problem is complicated by the fact that there are many border-line cases in which our somewhat hazy standards of commercial right and wrong fail to give any adequate guidance. A great need at present is a professional code of ethics.

Extent of the Seller's Influence.

It would be helpful if we could buttress the foregoing theory with quantitative measures of the extent to which

sellers actually do influence the valuations that buyers place upon products. Unfortunately there is little precise information on this point, and for the most part we shall be forced to depend upon estimates that generally seem subject to considerable bias. Enemies of aggressive methods apparently think that the technique of persuasion has been developed to such a degree of efficiency that the buyer is practically a helpless pawn in the hands of the skilled salesman. Friends of selling confronted by such beliefs are likely to point out that the salesman does very little to influence many sales and that, to quote the old truism, "You cannot sell a man something he does not want." Yet these same defenders frequently seem to feel that a good salesman can influence almost anyone to buy anything. Clearly, such exaggerations afford little basis for sound thinking.

Most modern economists assume that the efforts of sellers do have *some* effect upon demand. The analysis given by Burns[1] is perhaps typical. He argues that "sellers no longer accept the demand for their product (at each price) as beyond their control." They have, he thinks, come into possession of knowledge of methods that influence the attitudes of buyers and change their estimates of the utility of products. Sales pressure affects purchasers through its effect upon prices, upon the allocation of spending by consumers, and upon the benefits directly obtained by purchasers from the methods of sales promotion adopted.

Coles,[2] following a suggestion made by Burns, attempts to use the difficult distinction between spontaneous and stimulated demand as the basis for classification of costs and thus indirectly gives a hint as to the role of the seller. Those expenses incurred in satisfying the demand of con-

[1] BURNS, ARTHUR ROBERT, "The Decline of Competition," Chap. VIII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1936.

[2] COLES, JESSIE V., "The Consumer-buyer and the Market," p. 145, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1938.

sumers are to be counted as true marketing costs and are productive in the sense of creating time, place, and possession utilities. Costs incurred in changing or altering demand are not true marketing or production costs. They have, says this author, nothing to do with satisfying consumer demands.[1] They are to be called sales costs, and selling is the most expensive of all functions of marketing. Selling is largely devoted to demand creation. This means, it is claimed, "not only developing a potential desire, but making the desire so strong that it leads to purchase." The reader is to infer that although much of the expenditure is wasted, considerable demand is thus developed.

Waite and Cassady[2] are somewhat more specific. They say that the consumer's choices are often "greatly influenced" and quote Dibblee's estimate that consumers have conscious wants for about half of the things that they consume and depend upon suggestion and direction for the selection of the other half.[3]

A significantly different point of view is presented by a businessman. Feland[4] in a provocative article suggests that "selling" may be an illusion, if the term is taken to indicate some mysterious process of "making them want it." He points out that people generally feel that buying is self-initiated. Rarely will they admit that they were "sold." He concludes that "nine-tenths of selling consists in going where the buyer is or being where he goes. The other 10 per cent is a knowledge of the wares and a reasonable price upon them."

[1] This is true only if we accept the author's narrow definition of selling as demand creation. Concealed in the welter of phrases is the implication that demand creation is unproductive in the economic sense. This conclusion, as shown in preceding paragraphs, is not necessarily sound.

[2] WAITE, WARREN C., and RALPH CASSADY, JR., "The Consumer and the Economic Order," p. 161, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1939.

[3] DIBBLEE, GEORGE BINNEY, "The Laws of Supply and Demand," Constable & Company, Ltd., London, 1912.

[4] FELAND, F. R., Is Selling an Illusion? *Printers' Ink*, Aug. 25, 1927.

A study based upon observation of the actual buying practices of customers in retail stores[1] supplies some facts to supplement the foregoing theories. The survey dealt with 122 products as purchased in grocery stores, department stores, drugstores, home-furnishing shops, men's-

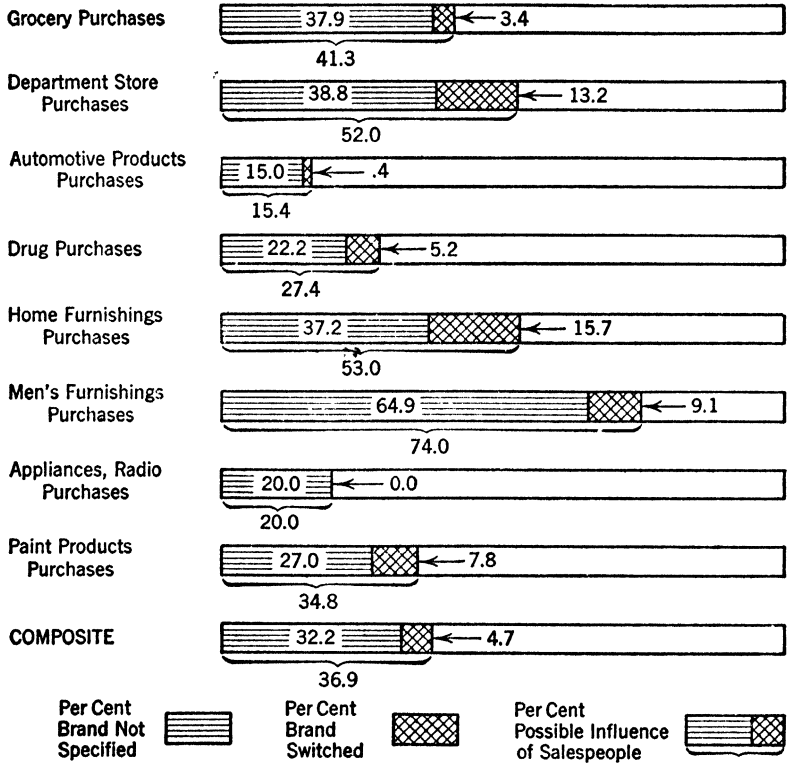

FIG. 2.—Showing, for retail transactions, the extent of brand specification and of brand switching by salespeople. (*Division of Marketing and Research, Liberty Magazine*, 1935.)

furnishing shops, automobile-supply stores, radio shops, and paint stores. In 67.8 per cent of the purchases observed, customers in asking for the desired products specified the brand. In 32.2 per cent of the cases they did not do so. In 4.7 per cent of the sales in which customers

[1] Over-the-Counter Influence on Sales by Brands, Division of Marketing and Research, *Liberty Magazine*, 1935.

asked for a specific brand the salespeople managed to induce them to shift to another brand. Supposedly when the buyer did not ask for a branded product, the salesperson exerted some influence in determining the customer's choice. The survey indicates that 36.9 per cent of the purchases may have been influenced by salespeople.

A time study of the activities of salesmen representing a drug wholesaler, reported by Carroll,[1] supplies additional data. In this investigation a man with a stop watch accompanied each salesman until a complete round of his territory had been made. A record of the amount of time spent in various activities was secured. The results are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
TIME STUDY OF SALESMEN'S ACTIVITIES*

Activities	Percentage of total salesmen's working time		
	City	Country	All
Order taking	17 518	15 768	16 149
Selling	28.641	21.367	22 952
Traveling	18 030	32.384	29.257
Visiting	17 308	15 537	15 923
Waiting	12 804	9 524	10.239
Lost by interruption	2.403	3.255	3.070
Other	3 296	2.165	2 410
Total	100.000	100.000	100.000

*From Carroll.

Carroll notes that

For the purpose of this study a rigid line was drawn between selling and order taking. In order to get credit for selling an item, the suggestion of the item must have originated with the salesman and he must have exerted effort in causing the retailer to purchase the item. No allowance was made for salesmen selling, or trying to sell, the customer. All selling effort, therefore, was item selling.

[1] CARROLL, EDWARD J., Wholesale Druggists' Operations, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Domestic Commerce Series* 86, p. 103, 1934.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF THE TIME STUDY OF THE SALESMEN'S ACTIVITIES*

Item	Average for city salesmen	Average for country salesmen	Average for all salesmen
Customers found in, per cent	91.983	81.443	86.174
Working time spent with customers, per cent	69.849	59.222	61 537
Time with customers spent in selling, per cent	41 004	34.527	37 297
Time with customers order taking, per cent	24.750	25.479	26.242
Contacts sold, per cent	37.131	57.732	48 485
Contacts not sold, per cent	62.869	42 268	51 515
Contacts giving an order, per cent	69.620	63 574	66.288
Contacts not giving an order, per cent	30.380	36.426	33.712
Customers that salesman tried to sell, per cent	68.776	75.601	72.538
Customers sold that salesman tried to sell, per cent	53.988	76.364	66.841
Average number of items that salesman tried to sell	4.294	10.000	7.572
Items sold that salesmen tried to sell, per cent	38.714	35.227	36.069
Percentage of items sold to total number of items	10.994	12.500	12.072
Average number of items sold per order	3.080	4 613	4.086
Average number of items on given order	13.297	29.324	21.769
Average value per item sold	$3.65	$5.20	$4 80
Average value per item in mere order taking	$1.27	$1.68	$1 56
Percentage of value of goods sold to total sales	26.288	30.612	29.649
Percentage of value of goods ordered to total sales	73.712	69.388	70.351

* From Carroll.

Table 4 summarizes the time study of the salesmen's activities. Inspection of the data from the two tables shows that these salesmen spent slightly less than 23 per cent of their working time in selling, or about 37 per cent of the time with the customer. The men tried to sell 72.5 per cent of the customers and succeeded in two out of every three attempts. Sales thus effected, however, represented less than 30 per cent of the total. Carroll comments

At first sight, it may seem that the cost of selling unduly exceeded the cost of order taking. However, it must not be forgotten that an

item sold today may, and does in many cases, mean more order taking tomorrow. It was impossible to determine the amount of future business coming from an item sold.

If we attempt to draw conclusions from all the foregoing mass of speculation and fact, apparently about the most we can say is that salesmen evidently do exert considerable influence. Much of this, however, is by suggestion rather than by overwhelming persuasion. The picture of the salesman as a hypnotist who goes around making people buy what they do not want is simply not true to the facts. We may venture the guess that not one purchase in ten thousand takes place as a result of the use of supersalesmanship.

Psychological Analysis of the Sale.

All these attempts at appraisal of the effects of the salesman's efforts presuppose a theory of the act of buying and of the manner in which the salesman influences that act. Unfortunately most thinking on this point has been appallingly vague and superficial. It is easy to visualize the salesman presenting his arguments and suggestions and emotional appeals and to imagine the buyer responding by yielding to the importunity. But how realistic is such a picture? What actually happens in the mind of the purchaser?

Analysis of the inner nature of the buying-selling process received very little systematic attention before the year 1900. E. St. Elmo Lewis is credited with having been the first to present a generally accepted description. About 1898 he suggested that in selling it is necessary to "attract attention, maintain interest, create desire." Later he added that it is necessary to "get action." This formula—sometimes designated by the initials AIDA—aroused considerable comment. Various writers adopted it and tried to devise improvements. As now quoted, it is frequently expanded to cover seven mental steps, as follows: *attention, interest, desire, confidence, decision, action, satisfaction.*[1]

[1] KITSON, H. D., "The Mind of the Buyer," p. 5, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1921.

Salesmen have usually been favorably impressed by this outline, mostly because it suggests definite steps that must be taken in order to bring about a sale. Writers on salesmanship have favored the analysis because it provides a framework within which ideas about the subject can be presented in what seems to be a logical order. Aside from this, the practical value of the formula is probably not very great. The difficulty is that it leads the uncritical salesman to think of himself as a kind of psychological engineer, whose job is to push certain buttons and pull certain levers in a buying mechanism. It obscures, if not ignores, the essentially dynamic nature of human behavior. It fosters the frequently unsound assumption that when customers buy after the salesman has gone through the AIDA ritual, their action must be the result of the operation of the formula.

The truth is that buyers in reacting to sales situations are at any given instant making numerous responses, such as those involved in attending, perceiving, comparing, wanting, deliberating, and deciding. They do not make these reactions in any fixed and predictable sequence. They cannot be forced to do so; and even if it were possible, the salesman who attempted such coercive measures would arouse resentment by his interference with the customer's freedom of action. If the items in the formula are regarded not as steps or stages but merely as descriptive terms, it probably does no harm to study them. It should be realized, however, that the seller's mental processes are vastly more complicated than this simple list would seem to indicate.

Recent writers on selling have tended to recognize the unsatisfactory nature of the AIDA outline and, following a suggestion made by Strong,[1] have tried to analyze the sale

[1] STRONG, E. K., JR., "The Psychology of Selling and Advertising," McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1925. See also LINK, H. C., "The New Psychology of Advertising and Selling," The Macmillan Company, New York, 1932.

from the buyer's rather than from the seller's point of view. In doing this we logically start with the buyer's wants, which provide the motives without which the purchase would not be made. These wants may be either active or dormant. If active, the individual is likely of his own volition to seek to trade; if dormant or subordinated, the exchange will not occur until something, usually the persuasive effort of the seller, has altered the situation. In either case the buyer during the sales interview is occupied in getting sensory data by inspection of the merchandise, perceiving qualities, appraising possible satisfaction, deliberating, and deciding. From the purchaser's point of view the seller can perform certain useful functions, such as designing, selecting, and making conveniently available desirable goods; giving information; calling attention to points that have been overlooked; finding ways to overcome the obstacles to purchase; and taking care of the details of transfer of title. The mental state of the buyer, however, is generally one of considerable tension, and the salesman may add to the discomfort by distracting suggestions, tactless disregarding of wants, and unwise attempts at control of the process of deliberation.

The Problem Approach.

The psychological analysis in terms of the buyer's wants is undoubtedly sound. Unfortunately it is lacking in appeal to the average salesman because it fails to provide him with a definite program of action. He finds it hard to translate the theory into practice. A simple technique is needed that will ensure every consideration being given to the buyer's wants without necessitating the detailed investigation that only a trained psychologist can make.

The best suggestion seems to be that the salesman should adopt what has been called the *problem approach*. This means that he forces himself to concentrate on the customer's difficulties and makes an honest effort to discover how these can be solved through the use of the goods or

services that are offered for sale. The immediate advantage of this plan is that it removes many of the sources of irritation; it is hard for the buyer to be antagonistic to the salesman who is exhibiting a genuine desire to be helpful. The problem approach is also theoretically sound, for without introducing confusing scientific subtleties it encourages careful attention to the buyer's wants. Finally, it is most practical from the seller's point of view, for it leads to the adoption of the only tactics that can be permanently profitable.

Many modern sales organizations today train their salesmen to use this approach. A large cash-register company, for example, instructs the representatives to begin with a discussion of the storekeeper's problem of lost or stolen cash. A computing-scale company, also selling to storekeepers, has made a special study of the problem of more convenient location of store fixtures, and the salesman is prepared to work with his customers along this line. A rug company has trained retail salesmen to make use of "ensemble selling," that is, selling the rug as a part of a whole scheme of interior decoration, which is the way that the customer sees it. A cement company has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in the study of its dealers' problems of accounting, delivery, merchandising, yard layout, and the like, with every salesman trained to talk helpfully on these subjects. The Coca-Cola Company has carried this idea to its logical conclusion and has abolished the sales force as such, using instead a corps of servicemen whose business it is to analyze the druggist's needs and supply them—not to "sell" Coca-Cola.

These are but a few illustrations of a very significant trend in selling, a trend that every alert salesman will do well to observe with closest attention. Older ideas and ideals are passing. Men of vision are recognizing that the salesman must perform the difficult feat of reconciling his own interests and those of his customers. They see that he needs a guiding principle of operation that will ensure

such reconciliation as far as is humanly possible. The problem approach is the most workable suggestion that has been offered to date. Although its application will not eliminate all friction between buyers and sellers, it will tend to reduce such friction to a minimum, which is the most that can be hoped for under the exchange system.

Conclusion: Definition of Selling, Salesmanship.

Selling is that division of marketing which has to do with all the numerous activities whereby those individuals or firms possessing goods or capable of rendering services seek to influence others to trade with them. Personal selling is that in which the influence is exerted directly by salesmen or saleswomen. Salesmanship is a popular term used to designate the body of arts practiced by sellers in their attempt to influence others to buy.[1]

As thus defined salesmanship is widely practiced, both by those who are engaged in it as a vocation and by many who do not think of themselves as sellers but who do find it desirable to try to make advantageous exchanges. In the proper use of the term, salesmanship occurs only in eco-

[1] In the first edition of this book selling was defined as "the business of showing people how they can satisfy their needs, wants, or desires through the purchase of goods or services." The revised definition given above expresses the same general idea but in more precise terms.

The Committee on Definitions of the National Association of Teachers of Marketing and Advertising gave the following definition: "Selling is the personal or impersonal process of assisting and/or persuading a prospective customer to buy a commodity or service or to act upon an idea."

Other definitions, illustrating a variety of approaches, follow:

"Salesmanship is the art exercised by the seller of effecting economic transfers."—TOSDAL.

"Salesmanship is the power or ability to influence people to buy at a mutual profit that which we have to sell but which they may not have thought of buying until we called their attention to it."—KNOX.

"Salesmanship is the science of the expansion of meaning of objects for the purpose of creating utility for them in legitimate commercial transactions."—BENNETT.

"Salesmanship is the power to persuade people to do what they had not intended or wanted to do—with a resultant profit to them from so doing."—BARNHART.

nomic situations and should not be applied to other types of persuasive effort.

The central problem in all selling is to determine the most effective means of influencing the buyer. In the last 50 years the trend has been toward greater use of impersonal devices, such as advertising. In personal salesmanship the tendency has been to place less emphasis on persuasion and to give more thought to the use of suggestion. The old idea that the object is to *make people buy* is slowly giving ground to the more socially acceptable ideal of *helping people buy*. This does not mean that sellers are displaying less initiative. It simply indicates that their energies are being directed more effectively.

Questions and Exercises

1. Does man have a natural disposition to trade?

2. Why do objects have value?

3. Discuss this statement: In the process of exchange, if one individual gains, the other inevitably loses.

4. Under a communistic system what functions commonly performed by salesmen would be superfluous?

5. What is meant by the statement: Each party to an exchange both buys and sells something?

6. Do all sellers experience a mental conflict of the type described in the text?

7. Are the efforts of the seller ever productive in the economic sense?

8. From the economic point of view what difference, if any, is there between spontaneous and stimulated demand?

9. Is the AIDA formula more applicable to the practice of advertising than to personal selling?

10. Is it morally right for a salesman to attempt to persuade people to buy?

11. Would consumer-buyers profit if all salesmen were eliminated?

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER IV

QUALITIES OF THE EFFECTIVE SALESMAN

With increase in the number of individuals employed in selling and growing recognition of the social, economic, and practical significance of their activities, there has been an expanding interest in the qualities of those who make the furthering of exchanges their vocation. The employer is interested because he wants to secure people who can do the work successfully. The individual salesman is concerned because he wants to know whether or not he is fitted for the job. Society in general has considerable at stake. It would seem that a discussion of the characteristics of the effective salesman logically precedes and leads up to the analysis of the principles of selling.

Popular Errors in Analyzing Sales Qualities.

Probably more nonsense has been written about the qualifications necessary for selling than in connection with any other topic in the field. Almost every textbook devotes considerable space to lists of traits that the author announces as the ones essential to sales success. One writer, for example, says that the salesmen must have tact, courage, imagination, industry, self-control, knowledge of the line, skill in imparting information. Another writer finds the essential traits to be love of truth, courtesy, resourcefulness, health, and will. Still another author, a sales manager, says:

> Give me a man with a good backbone, susceptible to instruction, willing to absorb, and with the disposition to obey orders, and I will assume the responsibility of his becoming a good salesman. It is true that he must have a foundation upon which to build. I will call the stones of that foundation intelligence, education, appearance, per-

sistence, self-control, and diplomacy. None of these is a gift but an accomplishment that can be developed more or less, according to the individual.

Hundreds of similar statements could be quoted. Many of them have the stamp of supposed authority. That does not prevent them from being meaningless and useless, if not actually misleading. It is just as sensible to say that a salesman must have digestibility as to say that he must have tact. It is as sound to argue that he must have chest capacity, visual acuity, weight, blood pressure, length of nose, or flexibility of tongue as to say that he must have will power or imagination or aggressiveness. Certainly he must have these and many more qualities if he is to be a man, if he is to exist at all. The question is not as to the possession or nonpossession of a quality or a set of qualities. The problem, properly stated, is: *How much of any trait or characteristic must a salesman have in order to be effective?*

When we present the question in this form, we are following the scientific rather than the popular mode of thought. The scientist recognizes that human traits exist in varying degrees in different individuals and that they are distributed according to what is generally called the curve of distribution. This is opposed to the popular concept, which assumes that the salesman does or does not have tact or industry or imagination in much the same way that he does or does not have two arms or a wig or a birthmark. A moment's consideration will show the fallacy in the popular notion.

It is readily apparent that if one is to employ the scientific approach, he must have a measure of the factors with which he deals. Instead of blithely drawing up a list of attributes on the basis of common sense and intuition, the person who really aspires to speak with authority on the subject must attempt to define the alleged traits that he proposes to consider, get tests that can be shown to measure those traits in terms of degree, establish standards as to what constitutes effectiveness in selling, give the tests to a satis-

factorily large number of salesmen, and show the relationship between the tests and the criteria of sales success.

The First Problem: Criteria of Success.

In any scientific attempt to develop methods for the selection of those likely to be effective in selling, the first requisite is the establishment of objective standards of success. Without such standards we cannot be sure that everyone has the same concept of what constitutes good work. Until we can achieve agreement on that point, there is no basis for discussion. Moreover, any measure of the traits of salesmen will have little vocational significance unless it can be shown to bear some relationship to actual accomplishments.

At first glance the problem of evaluating the effectiveness of men who are engaged in selling seems simple. The obvious thing to do is to find the earnings or the quantity of goods sold over a specific period. By this standard the man who sells large quantities of goods is a good salesman and is better than the men who sell less. A little thought, however, will convince one that such a yardstick is frequently inadequate and unfair. Everyone knows that an individual may have a poor sales record for reasons that have nothing to do with his actual sales ability. Earnings or total sales simply indicate what a man has been able to do under the specific circumstances that he has encountered. They indicate his fundamental efficiency as it expressed itself in the presence of certain limitations. They measure ability plus opportunity.

Clearly, then, before we can advance very far in defining sales ability, we must take into account what may be called conditioning factors. Of these the more important are the following:

1. Nature of territory or opportunity.
2. Nature of cooperation given.
3. Time with the company.
4. Previous experience.

5. Health of the salesman.
6. Nature of the salesman's growth.

These elements do not cover all that might be mentioned but are sufficient to give an insight into the complicated problem of arriving at a real measure of sales capacity. To show their importance, let us suppose that in a given company we have two salesmen whose records of sales for a specific period, say six months, are equal. A superficial conclusion would be that their abilities are also equal. Study of the situation, however, reveals that one of them operates in a rich territory where his opportunities are numerous whereas the other man has a definitely inferior district. Let us further suppose that the first salesman is a relative of an officer of the company and is frequently the recipient of special consideration. He has been with the company for many years, whereas the other salesman is a newcomer. Suppose, finally, that the first salesman during the period covered by the sales record was suffering from the effects of an automobile accident, which seriously impaired his ability to handle the work. What conclusion is possible regarding the fundamental sales capacities of these two individuals?

A common method of resolving the difficulty just described is to fall back on the judgment of an individual, such as the sales manager, who not only is familiar with the sales records of the men under consideration but is presumably cognizant of circumstances that have artificially improved or impaired the record. The difficulty is that such rankings are subject to all the errors that in some measure invalidate most human judgments. Quite aside from the personal bias and prejudice that may be present, it is frequently impossible for the manager to be familiar with all the variable circumstances or to make any just evaluation of the influence of those about which he does know.

To summarize, we may say that the standards of success are necessarily based on production records, which are

reliable only when corrected by allowing for the effect of many contributing factors, or upon the judgments of those who are, at best, imperfect judges. Since tests of sales ability can be demonstrated to be valid only by showing their agreement with a yardstick that is itself imperfect, we are at the outset forced to realize that the higher standards of precision are unattainable. Measures of sales ability can never be so reliable, say, as is the measurement of a steel ball by micrometer.

Methods Employed to Discover Sales Ability; Judgments.

Granting all that has just been said regarding the unreliability of the criteria with which we must work, it is still possible, within a given sales organization, to make a rough ranking of the salesmen already employed, placing at the top of our list those of superior ability and at the bottom those who are definitely deficient. Our problem then is to discover some means by which we can predict in advance the probable position on such a scale of a new man who has never worked for the company. We will agree that this method of prophecy should not be accepted blindly just because it sounds plausible or because it has the weight of authority behind it. If it is to receive our approval, it must be subject to actual trial and must demonstrate its validity in a convincing manner. We shall briefly consider the principal methods that have been used in attempting to predict vocational fitness and the extent to which they have been demonstrated to be trustworthy.

The method of individual judgment is one of the oldest and most widely employed. Its application is well illustrated by the following quotation from a sales manager:

> As the applicant comes into the room, I give him a swift inspection. I can usually tell in that first glance whether the man is going to be successful with our company or not. It stands to reason that if he does not favorably impress me, he is not going to create a favorable impression among the prospects upon whom he will call. I can also tell in that first glance if he has the intelligence and the personality to handle our line. I trust my intuition rather than any copybook rule.

If my first impression has been good, I proceed to have a talk with the salesman. I find out what his experience has been. If he has sold bonds or insurance, we will not hire him. I have found that salesmen who have sold in these fields never succeed with us. I ask if he is married or not. I like young, unmarried men, with all their youthful vigor and enthusiasm. Ordinarily, however, I will not employ college boys; they think that they know more about the business than I do.

As the man talks to me, I notice the little things about his dress and appearance and manner. I notice if he looks me in the eye. If he does not, I will not hire him. I watch his hands; I have found that men with long, slender, muscular fingers are especially successful. I notice his flow of language, his choice of words.

In 10 minutes of such careful, scientific study of personality I come to a decision. Almost invariably I can decide at the end of that time how successful the man is going to be.

This probably gives a fair picture of the method of employment selection used until relatively recently by many employers. Not until students of applied psychology began to question the validity of this method was there any general recognition that it had serious limitations.

About the year 1915 Scott and others began to conduct experiments that brought out significant facts. In one test, for example, it was arranged that eight interviewers were to inspect a group of 29 applicants from which 15 salesmen were to be selected for a tobacco company. Of the eight interviewers, seven were sales managers and one was a division manager. Presumably these eight men were of average ability in judging. Each of the eight interviewers had a separate room and met the men one at a time, giving each applicant a rating, showing his standing in the group of 29. That is, each judge placed at the top of his list the applicant who he thought would make the best salesman, next the man whom he rated second best, and so on down to the lowest, or twenty-ninth, individual. Obviously, if each judgment had been made with absolute accuracy, and if the judges had all had in mind the same common standard, all the ratings when compared should have been exactly alike. If on the other hand, their judgments were inac-

curate or their standards differed, their rankings would have failed to show any such similarity. This is exactly what happened. No one of the 29 applicants was placed among the first 15 by all the eight judges. For example, one man who was rated first by one judge was rated nineteenth by a second and twenty-third by another.

At the end of several weeks the sales records of the 15 men employed were compared with the initial judgments of their ability. It was evident that the interviews had not been very successful in picking out the effective salesmen. For example, the 4 men who ranked highest in sales had been judged to be average or below average at the outset. If the company had employed only 5 salesmen instead of 15, the 4 men who on the basis of sales records turned out to be the most successful would not have been hired.

A similar experiment reported by Hollingworth[1] emphasizes the same point. In this instance 12 sales managers for prominent companies interviewed 57 applicants for positions involving personal salesmanship in connection with a well-known service. The applicants were rated individually, each judge having a private room and seeing each applicant for a definite period which was the same in all cases. Wide variations in judgment were found. One applicant, for instance, was ranked by the 12 judges as follows: first, second, sixth, ninth, tenth, sixteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-sixth, twenty-eighth, fifty-third, and fifty-seventh. In other words this man was considered the best among 57 by one expert judge, whereas another judge rated him at the bottom of the list. Hollingworth points out that "however much the interview may be improved by better methods, in its traditional form it is highly unreliable."

In the intervening years since these pioneer investigations were performed, numerous attempts have been made to devise interview methods whereby more valid judgments

[1] HOLLINGWORTH, H. L., "Judging Human Character," pp. 62–66, D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., New York, 1923.

may be secured.[1] Some improvements result from the careful selection and training of interviewers, the precise definition of traits to be judged, objective methods for expressing rankings, and the standardization of interview procedures. Even with these refinements, it is now generally realized by those familiar with the evidence that judgments are far from precise. For practical reasons the preliminary interview is necessary in the selection of employees, but many organizations are supplementing it by the use of other devices to be mentioned in subsequent paragraphs. As far as the qualities requisite for effective selling are concerned, the interview method has not resulted in much generalized information of great value. If we ask sales managers what they look for in salesmen, we are likely to secure a long list of poorly defined traits such as ambition, enthusiasm, confidence, imagination, and sincerity. Such lists may well serve as a point of departure for more careful analysis, but their unsatisfactory vagueness should be recognized.

Methods of Discovering Sales Ability: Statistical Analysis.

With clearer realization of the unsatisfactory nature of the interview as a method of discovering sales ability, we are driven to seek devices that are more mechanical, less subject to human bias and fallibility. It should be understood that no method is likely to be devised that can satisfactorily take the place of face-to-face appraisal. It is possible, however, to develop supplementary procedures of real aid. An approach with much to recommend it in this connection is the estimating of an individual's probable achievement on the basis of his past performance and his present position in life. The sales manager quoted on page 74 was really trying to do this in an unsystematic fashion when he said that he did not take any college graduates or security and insurance salesmen. That a man has had

[1] See BINGHAM, WALTER VAN DYKE, and BRUCE VICTOR MOORE, "How to Interview," Harper & Brothers, New York, 1934.

certain experience or at present occupies a certain position undoubtedly tells us something as to his chances of success in selling a specific product. The important thing, however, is to discover which items are significant and how much weight they deserve to have in making a prediction. The sales manager quoted above probably committed a foolish blunder when he refused to hire a man simply because he had sold life insurance. Such experience is obviously only one factor and probably a minor one, and its negative influence, if any, might easily be offset in some individuals by other desirable factors. Common sense suggests that a systematic attempt be made to find out just how significant such items of experience or equipment are and to weight them according to their significance when securing a grand total of positive and negative items.

The statistical procedure in setting up such a system of weighting is not unduly complicated. We are first required to have the performance records of a considerable number of men actually engaged in selling for the company whose problems are to be studied. Classifying these men into two groups, the successful and the unsuccessful, we determine, by analysis of the application blanks that they filled out before they were employed, what percentage of each group responded affirmatively or negatively for specific items. For example, Russell and Cope[1] studied the records of 500 salesmen selected by the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company. They found that 59 per cent of the men who were married at the time they joined the company were later classified as successful in selling insurance whereas only 49 per cent of the single men were in this group. A score of 59 was therefore assigned to each married applicant, and 49 to each who was single. Weights for other items were arrived at in the same manner. Other investigators have employed variations of this procedure.

[1] RUSSELL, W., and G. V. COPE, A Method of Rating the History and Achievements of Applicants for Positions, *Public Personnel Studies*, 3, pp. 202–209, 1925.

The essential point is that new applicants receive credits or demerits for various items according to the significance of those items as determined by the previous experience of the company.

The operation of such a system is well illustrated in an early research reported by Goldsmith.[1] Working with the personal history blanks of 502 insurance agents of the Guardian Life Insurance Company, this investigator selected certain elements of information that were of significance in relation to sales success. These items and their weight or value are shown in the accompanying table.

TABLE 5*

Education	Value	Service	Value
8 years	1	Full time	2
10 years	2	Part time	−2
12 years	3	Clubs	
16 years	2	Belongs to clubs	1
Marital Status		Does not belong	−1
Married	1	Insurance	
Single	−1	Carried	1
Age		Not carried	−1
18 to 20	−2	Occupation	
21 to 22	−1	Social	1
23 to 24	0	Unsocial	−1
25 to 27	1	Confidence	
28 to 29	2	Replies to question: "What	
30 to 40	3	amount of insurance are	
41 to 50	1	you confident of placing	
51 to 60	0	each month?"	1
Over 60	−1	Does not reply	−1
Experience			
Life insurance experience	1		

* After Goldsmith.

The selection and weighting of these items were not the result of guesswork but of actual investigation of their significance. The scoring method was simple. If the applicant was twenty years old, or less, he was scored a minus 2 on age. If he was twenty-one or twenty-two years

[1] GOLDSMITH, DOROTHY B., The Use of the Personal History Blank as a Salesmanship Test, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 6, pp. 149–155, 1922.

old, his score was minus 1, and so on. It was found that men did best who were between thirty and forty years of age when coming with the company, and men of these ages scored plus 3, the highest score. Going on down through the list of items, it will be found that the highest possible total that an individual could make was 14. A man who made this score was between thirty and forty years old, of about 12 years' education, experienced in selling life insurance, confident of selling life insurance, married, of social occupation, intending to spend full time in insurance, and a club member.

In the experiment the production records of the 502 salesmen were taken for the first year with the company, and the men were thus divided into three classes, according to their success. These three groups were then studied in connection with their scores on the personal-history blank. The results are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6
RELATION BETWEEN AMOUNT OF INSURANCE SOLD AND SCORE ON PERSONAL-HISTORY BLANK*

Units of production	Below 4	4 to 8	Above 8	Total
0 to 49	232 men	159 men	42 men	433 men
50 to 99	5 men	15 men	8 men	28 men
100 and over	6 men	17 men	18 men	41 men
Total	243 men	191 men	68 men	502 men

* After Goldsmith.

A consideration of the facts shown in the table indicates that there is some relationship between high scores on the personal-history blank and high scores in selling. Only 6 men of the most successful group scored less than four on the blank, whereas 232 of the "failure" group did so. There seems basis for Goldsmith's plan of setting 4 as a critical score, or dead line. If all men scoring less than this had been refused employment, certainly a good number of failures would have been eliminated. We must note, however, that some successes would likewise have been excluded.

The device, then, is not a perfect one. If we had a large group of applicants from which to select and were going to retain only a small number for closer scrutiny, a procedure of this kind might have considerable value.

Initial studies such as that of Goldsmith were rapidly followed by numerous similar investigations, which in some instances involved years of research and were based on the records of thousands of salesmen.[1] As a single example we may continue with the experience of the Guardian Life Insurance Company.[2] Basing its later procedure on an extensive survey made in 1931 by the Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, it developed the personal rating chart (Fig. 3) shown on pages 82–83. Seven factors that were found to be significant and, with appropriate ratings, are now used in the evaluation include age, education, marital status, previous business experience, financial status, years in community, and employment. For each of these items a maximum score in points is established, from which penalty points are subtracted. Thus an applicant twenty-five to forty years of age scores the maximum, which is 3 points on this item. An applicant under twenty-five years of age, however, suffers a 2-point penalty, which leaves him with a net of 1 point. The penalty points indicate that for this company the least desirable applicants are those who are over fifty years of age; have had less than one year of high school; have had previous experience as bankers, doctors, lawyers, or scientists; and have been in the community less than three months.

A salesman who achieved the maximum number of points on each factor would have a total of 20. Using the average production of agents who achieved this total, a comparison may be made between scores and selling efficiency. The

[1] A review of the literature on the subject is beyond the scope of this book. References to the more important studies will be found in an article by Morris S. Viteles, The Value of Psychology in Selecting Salesmen, American Management Association, *Marketing Series* 45, 1941.

[2] Chart System for Choosing Salesmen, *Printers' Ink Monthly*, March, 1939.

PERSONAL
Qualifications for

RATING SCALE				
1	2	3	4	5
Factors	Qualifications for Standard Rating	Maximum Points	Penalties	Net Points
Age	25 to 40 years, inclusive	3		
Education	College Graduate	3		
Marital Status	Married Single, if under age 25	3		
Previous Experience	1 Year or more Outside Selling (see Penalty Table for exceptions) Retail Store Proprietors Executives Insurance Clerks Sales Promotion or Management	4		
Financial Status — Life Insurance Owned	Under Age 25 - $1,000 or more Ages 25 - 29 - $3,000 or more Ages 30 and over - $5,000 or more	1		
Financial Status — Savings (Including Life Ins. C.V.)	Under Age 25 - $250 or more Ages 25 - 29 - $500 or more Ages 30 and over - $1,000 or more	1		
Years in Community	2 Years or more	3		
Employed	Employed	2		
	Total	20		

FIG. 3.—Rating chart used by Guardian Life

RATING CHART

Life Insurance Selling Name

6		PENALTY POINT TABLE 7	Penalty Points 8
Age		Under age 25	2
		Ages 41 - 50 inclusive	2
		Over 50 years	3
Education		Less than College Graduate, but at least High School Graduate	1
		Less than High School Graduate, but at least 1 year High School	2
		Less than 1 year High School	3
Marital Status		Single (Ages 25 - 40)	1
		Single (Ages 41 and over)	2
		Separated, Divorced, Widower	1
Previous Experience		Life or General Insurance Selling	1
		Two Years or more Financial Selling	2
		Less than 1 Year Outside Selling (less than 6 months - take prior occupation)	1
		Inside (Store) Selling	2
		Student, Teacher, Clergy, Social Service	1
		Clerical Workers (other than insurance)	2
		Bankers, Doctors, Lawyers, Scientists	3
		Non - Selling Occupations not Mentioned	3
Financial Status	Life Insurance Owned	Under Age 25 - less than $1,000 Ages 25 - 29 - less than $3,000 Ages 30 and over - less than $5,000	1
	Savings (Including Life Ins. C.V.)	Under Age 25 - less than $250 Ages 25 - 29 - less than $500 Ages 30 and over - less than $1,000	1
Years in Community		Less than 2 Years but more than 1 Year	1
		Less than 1 Year but more than 3 Months	2
		Less than 3 Months	3
Employed		Unemployed 3 to 6 Months	1
		Unemployed 6 Months or More	2

Insurance Company. (*From Printers' Ink Monthly.*)

results are shown in Fig. 4. This is derived from the records of first-year sales of 1,190 full-time Guardian agents contracted between July 1, 1932, and June 30, 1936. The company has found that men with scores of less than 16 on the rating chart are generally such poor producers that it does not pay to hire them. The use of this chart in selection, accompanied by a system of early elimination of men

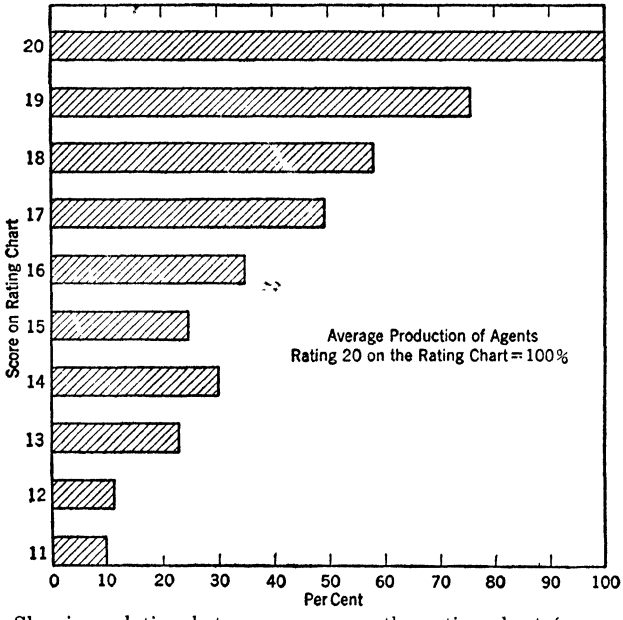

FIG. 4.—Showing relation between scores on the rating chart (see p. 82) and average first-year sales of Guardian agents. (*From Printers' Ink Monthly.*)

who during the first three months' work have proved to be ineffective, has resulted in a substantial decrease in the number of agents employed, accompanied by an increase in total production for the company and of average production per agent.

Analysis of data such as the foregoing leads Viteles[1] to conclude that

. . . the relatively simple device of determining experimentally the significance of marital status, number of dependents, organization

[1] *Loc. cit.*

affiliation, and so on, to sales accomplishment has withstood the test of time better than any other single method employed in predicting sales achievement.

He is careful to point out, however, that the specific items and weights found useful in the reported study will not be equally valid for all types of selling. Only experimentation can show which items are significant for the salesman of a specific company, and the method should not be adopted without careful investigation covering the records of a statistically adequate sample of employees.

Application of Statistical Analysis in Retail Selling.

A study made by Anderson[1] shows how this method of analysis may be applied in retail stores that employ enough salespeople to justify the procedure. In his study he selected 284 salesclerks on the basis of their selling cost or production rating. "High-cost cases" and "lost-cost cases" were determined by taking the lowest 25 per cent and the highest 25 per cent. The procedure was then to determine the prevalence of various factors in the two groups. Some conclusions reached were

1. *Age.*—Three times as many employees under twenty-one years of age were found in the high-cost-of-selling group as were found in the low-cost group.

2. *Length of Service.*—Twice as many cases of over 10 years' service were found in the high-cost-of-selling group.

3. *Schooling.*—There seemed to be no definite relationship between schooling received and selling-cost rating.

4. *Sex.*—There appeared to be little sex difference with regard to selling efficiency in the retail store.

5. *Marital Status.*—The percentage of individuals who were single was relatively low in the low-cost-of-selling group and relatively high in the high-cost-of-selling group. Widows were more likely to be found in the low-cost-of-selling group.

[1] ANDERSON, V. V., The Difference between Good and Poor Salespeople, *Retail Ledger*, second August issue, 1929.

6. *Selling Experience.*—Individuals with extensive selling experience were somewhat more numerous in the low-cost group. Such experience, however, did not seem to be especially significant.

Various other physical and mental traits, some of which will be mentioned later, were covered by this investigation. Apparently the method of statistical analysis has not proved so generally applicable in retail selling as in other fields. There may also be less reason for its use.

Methods of Discovering Sales Ability: Tests.

In the last 25 years increased interest in the use of psychological tests has encouraged attempts to apply them to the selection of salesmen. This movement has not yet reached maturity, and it is too early to predict what the outcome will be, although certain general tendencies may be discerned.

In the preparation and use of tests, various procedures have been employed. These approaches may be grouped roughly under four classifications, as follows:

1. Tests that attempt to simulate actual sales situations.
2. Tests that aim to measure supposedly essential traits.
3. Empirical application of existing tests.
4. Item analysis and selection.

Under the first procedure the attempt is to reproduce somewhat closely actual selling situations, and the performance of the individual in the sample is taken as indicative of his probable performance in the field. A very crude application of this method is practiced by sales managers when they casually place applicants for sales positions in trying situations and observe their reactions. For example, Hepner[1] describes a manager who arranged his office so that there was no chair in which the applicant might sit and no rack on which he might hang his hat and coat. When a

[1] HEPNER, HARRY WALKER, "Psychology Applied to Life and Work," p. 263, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1941.

candidate for sales work came into the room, the manager would invite him to hang up his hat and coat and to sit down. If the would-be salesman seemed baffled and confused under this circumstance, the manager assumed that he was lacking in initiative and hence unfitted for the job.

The trouble with this procedure is that there is no objective method of scoring the performance of the individual. The sample of his behavior is moreover very small. Common sense suggests that it would be unwise to place much reliance on such a method.

Somewhat more workmanlike are those tests in which a number of sales situations are described and the applicant is asked to indicate what his response to them would be. For example the following is taken from a test containing 25 such items.

Your prospect refuses to buy, saying that he dislikes your company and will not do business with it. You should

A. Give him logical, convincing proof of the superiority of your product.

B. Try to find out why he dislikes your company and to dispel his prejudice.

C. Disregard his complaint and set out to make him buy.

D. Tell him that you have been selling only a short time and would greatly appreciate his buying from you.

Here the second answer is the one preferred by most salesmen. Unfortunately it is also the one selected by most people of normal intelligence, even if they have little sales ability. Apparently a test of this kind is useful in detecting those applicants whose comprehension and judgment are extremely limited. Beyond this, experience has shown that it is difficult to devise questions that will elicit different replies from salesman and nonsalesman. If it were not for this unfortunate weakness, sales-situation tests of the kind just illustrated might be quite useful. The best conclusion to date seems to be that they are not so promising as other approaches that are apparently less commonsense and direct.

Attempts to Measure Essential Sales Traits.

A second approach that at first glance seems feasible is to select certain traits judged to be of importance in selling and to secure psychological tests to measure these basic factors. A considerable amount of research has been conducted along this line. In general the results have been disappointing. For our present purpose it is more pertinent to suggest some of the reasons for this unsatisfactory outcome than to present a lengthy description of all the attempts that have been made.

A basic difficulty seems to be that popular words such as aggressiveness, tact, self-confidence, and persistence do not designate any absolute units of behavior but are merely loosely descriptive of general tendencies. Thus an individual may be relatively aggressive in certain circumstances and display relatively less of this behavior in others. As a consequence, the sample of his reactions measured in the test may not be truly representative of his normal performance under actual field conditions. To this we may add that with some tests the alert individual can discern the "best answer" and make a response that indicates the excellence of his judgment rather than the degree to which he possesses the trait being measured.

A second difficulty is that even if we had valid tests of all of the traits required in effective selling, we would not know how to combine them in order to get a total score for a specific individual. Total selling efficiency is presumably not the simple sum of separate efficiencies, but it is rather the resultant of the interaction of various factors that are present in varying degrees. To express this idea in another way, two salesmen whose sales records indicate that they are equal in ability may achieve their results in quite different ways. There is no single formula for success.

Empirical Application of Existing Tests.

Because of the difficulties just enumerated, the experimenters have had to proceed by a process that may be

described as one of trial and error and chance success. They have administered all sorts of tests and measures in the hope that some of them might turn out to be useful indicators of sales ability. Typical of this approach is a study made by Freyd.[1] In an attempt to find significant differences between two groups, one composed of salesmen and the other made up of individuals whose interests were supposed to be centered in the field of mechanics, he administered to both groups an imposing battery of tests and questionnaires including the following:

1. A test of general intelligence
2. The Downey Will-Temperament Test
3. A directed-association test
4. The Kent-Rosanoff Free Association Test
5. Five questionnaires:
   a. Early personal history
   b. Vocational interests
   c. Avocational interests
   d. Likes and dislikes
   e. Beliefs
6. Ratings of subjects by self and others for various traits

This list indicates the comprehensive nature of the investigation. The tests were given to the two groups, and the average scores compared, likewise the general form of distribution of the scores.

In some instances small and insignificant differences were found. In others the differences were large enough to make it seem likely that a real group characteristic had been discovered. It should be borne in mind that these differences were a matter of degree, not of kind. As Freyd remarks, "There is nothing in the results submitted to prove the existence of *types* of people; rather can we conclude that *extremes* exist with regard to any trait or combination of traits."[2]

[1] FREYD, MAX, The Personalities of the Socially and the Mechanically Inclined, *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. 33, No. 4, whole No. 151, pp. 1 to 101, 1924.

[2] FREYD, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

Some of the specific results of Freyd's investigation are given in a later chapter in connection with our discussion of the selling attitude. For the present, we will simply note that the degree of differentiation achieved by his most effective test was not by any means perfect. On any measurement some of the mechanically inclined individuals did as well or better than some of the salesmen. This finding has been repeated with almost monotonous regularity by more recent investigators who, using various tests of ascendancy-submissiveness, introversion-extroversion, mental alertness, and the like, have sought to find points of difference between salesmen and their fellowmen or between successful and unsuccessful salespeople. We are forced to the general conclusion that the cluster of traits associated with this vague quality called sales ability exists to some extent in every normal individual. It seems improbable that any generally applicable test of sales ability will be found.

Item Analysis and Selection.

At present the most promising line of development apparently is through a process of item analysis similar to that described in connection with the study of application blanks, on page 78. A good example of the use of this procedure may be found in Strong's Vocational Interest Analysis. He prepared a blank on which the individual could report his likes and dislikes and interests and secured the reactions of thousands of persons in various vocations. He then studied the results to discover the items to which men in a certain field, say real estate salesmen, gave responses significantly different from those of men in other lines. The results are now widely used in vocational guidance. The assumption is that if a man has interests corresponding closely to those of individuals already in a given vocation, he is somewhat likely to succeed in that field of endeavor.[1]

[1] STRONG, EDWARD K., JR., Interests and Sales Ability, *The Personnel Journal*, Vol. 13, pp. 204–216, 1935.

The degree to which the Interest Analysis is helpful is indicated in a study of representatives of the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company, reported by Bills.[1] There were 588 men in the test group. Those men filled out the Interest Analysis blank while attending a school conducted by the company. A year after attendance at the school they were rated as to their degree of success or failure by the managers under whom they had worked. From the Interest Analysis forms their scores for two vocations, life insurance sales and real estate sales, were combined. These combined scores ranged from plus 6 to minus 6. The following shows the relationship between the scores and the managers' ratings:

Of men scoring plus 6,	25 per cent were rated outstanding successes.
	53 per cent were rated successes.
	22 per cent were rated as failures.
Of men scoring plus 4 or plus 5,	16 per cent were rated outstanding successes.
	56 per cent were rated as successes.
	28 per cent were rated as failures.
Of men scoring plus 3 to minus 2,	11 per cent were rated outstanding successes.
	47 per cent were rated as successes.
	42 per cent were rated as failures.
Of men scoring minus 3 to minus 5,	8 per cent were rated outstanding successes.
	39 per cent were rated successes.
	53 per cent were rated as failures.
Of men scoring minus 6,	4 per cent were rated outstanding successes.
	20 per cent were rated successes.
	76 per cent were rated as failures.

Apparently although the Interest Analysis did not magically separate those who would succeed from those who were destined to fail, it did give some useful indications. It seems likely that by a careful study of the responses of the successful and unsuccessful casualty salesman a new Interest Analysis blank could be prepared that would be even more effective as a means of prediction.

[1] BILLS, M. A., Relation of Scores on Strong's Interest Analysis Blanks to Success in Selling Casualty Insurance, *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 22, pp. 97–104, 1938.

Several investigators are at present using the method of item analysis with apparent success. Dodge,[1] for example, found that 62 items of the 125 in the Bernreuter Personality Inventory showed a significant relationship to success in department-store selling. Combining these 62 items, he secured scores that his further tests showed to be useful. Kornhauser[2] has applied the same technique in setting up an aptitude index for life insurance salesmen. The method is laborious, and the results are usually applicable only to a specific type of selling. In spite of these drawbacks, this approach seems the most promising of any considered.

Questions and Exercises

1. Comment on this statement: The most important trait in the salesman is aggressiveness.
2. Comment on this statement: The only way to tell whether or not a man is a good salesman is to look at his record.
3. Why do equally competent judges frequently arrive at very different estimates of the probable effectiveness of an applicant for a sales position?
4. How would you go about determining the relationship between the physical height and weight of salesmen and the degree of success in selling a specific product?
5. Why is it usually not advisable for a small company, employing few salesmen, to make use of tests in selecting applicants for a sales position?
6. Under what circumstances might a "sales-situations test" be valid as a measuring instrument?
7. Discuss this statement: It is improbable that any generally applicable test of sales ability will be found?
8. Could the item-analysis method, as described in the text, be employed in constructing a vocabulary test for use in predicting sales success or failure?

Suggested Readings

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FERNALD, CHARLES H.: "Salesmanship," Chap. V, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1936.

[1] DODGE, A. F., Social Dominance and Sales Personality, *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 22, pp. 132*ff.*, 1938.

[2] See "The Value of Psychology in Selecting Salesmen," American Management Association, New York, *Marketing Series* 45, p. 25, 1941.

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HEPNER, HARRY WALKER: "Psychology Applied to Life and Work," Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1941.

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CHAPTER V

IMPROVING SELLING PRACTICE

People who have not given much thought to the matter have the idea that learning to sell is like learning history or mathematics or geography—a simple task of reading the book until the subject is mastered. This approach to the study of personal selling is unfortunate. It is almost sure to lead to wasted time. Students should know this from the beginning.

Of course it is possible, if one wishes, to study selling merely with the purpose of acquiring information. A few scholars may want to know about the subject in the same way that they may want to know about the facts of history or of language or of science. Most students of selling, however, have no such academic interest. They are seeking something that will make them more effective. They are more concerned with practical applications of facts about selling methods. They do not wish merely to *know*—they want to be able to *use* their knowledge.

This entirely reasonable demand that the study of selling be practical introduces some special problems not met in most types of learning. Failure to recognize these difficulties has led to much confusion and misdirected effort. No one should undertake the study of selling in a serious way until he understands these difficulties.

The nature of these special problems will appear in the discussion that follows. By way of introduction we may note that they center around the following points:

1. The problem of translating sales principles into selling practice.
2. The problem of selecting and adopting a suitable selling style.
3. The problem of mastering a limited number of fundamental selling principles.

Translating Principles into Practice.

The fundamental problem in learning to sell is clearly brought out in the following story—it is really a parable—from the *Service Bulletin* issued by the John Ward Shoe Company:

As the boy who tended the newsstand was absorbed in reading a book, I hunted around until I found the magazine I wanted and then approached him. When I spoke to him, he did not raise his eyes from the page but held out his hand for the coin and dropped it automatically into the till. I said:

"Where's the change?"

"What did you get?" he replied, still without looking up.

I told him.

"How much is it?" he asked.

I said that I did not know.

"Can't you read it on the cover?" he inquired crossly.

I searched the cover until I found the price mark tucked away in the hair of the pretty girl picture. When I told the boy, he tossed the change over the counter. One of the coins rolled on the floor, but I recovered it while the boy read on.

Curious to know what book he was reading so absorbedly, I glanced over his shoulder at the title. It was—"The Science and Art of Salesmanship."[1]

Unfortunately this picture is all too true. Ambitious salesmen apply themselves diligently to books on selling. They listen to lectures. They cram themselves with good ideas about selling. But they miss the obvious fact that there is little profit in all this effort unless their study bears fruit in improved selling practice.

Selling Involves a Special Kind of Learning.

There must be some reason for the common failure to apply selling principles. A brief survey of the facts of learning will help us discover this reason and to suggest a remedy.

An old but serviceable analysis of varieties of learning enumerates the following types.

[1] John Ward *Service Bulletin* 10.

KINDS OF LEARNING

1. *Acquisition of Knowledge.*—As in learning history, mathematics, and language.

2. *Acquisition of Skill.*—As in learning to play the piano, to write shorthand, skate, dance, and play golf.

3. *Acquisition of Conduct.*—As in learning to talk effectively; to deal tactfully and courteously with people; to be patient, persistent, faithful, and honest.

These types of learning overlap considerably, and they all probably involve much the same brain mechanisms in the process of acquisition. The important fact from the point of view of the study of salesmanship is that they differ greatly in the ease with which practice takes place.

For example, if a man wishes to learn mathematics, he goes to a school. He is given a textbook. It tells all that he needs to know and is supplemented by the efforts of the teacher. If the student is diligent and of sufficient intelligence, he soon masters the book. He studies more books, always with efficient guidance and supervision and stimulation. Soon he is a full-fledged mathematician, entitled to write a string of letters after his name. He has acquired knowledge.

Or consider a second case. A girl wishes to become a typist. She goes to a school, is given a book of directions, and is shown just how to strike the keys, just which keys to strike with each finger. If she makes a mistake, there is an immediate record of it. The instructor stands ready to check up on her skill, to test her from time to time, to spur her on to greater effort. If the girl is patient and persistent and of sufficient intelligence, she soon achieves fair speed. She has acquired skill.

Suppose, on the other hand, that a man wishes to become a salesman. Suppose he goes to a class or takes a course. He is given a book and is confronted with a long list of admonitions such as the following, which are taken from the first three chapters of a well-known text on selling:

TYPICAL RULES FOR SALESMEN

Develop a pleasing sales personality.
Acquire a knowledge of and sympathy for human nature.
Develop social grace and poise.
Plan your sale.
Learn how to close the sale.
Acquire the capacity for being interested in your work.
Be enthusiastic.
Have a properly balanced diet.
Cultivate an erect posture.
Keep clean.
Develop a clear, well-modulated, sympathetic voice.
Work hard.
Be ambitious.
Be interested in your work.
Be honest and loyal.
Cultivate the ability to get along with others.
Learn to have a saving sense of humor.
Acquire the habit of self-analysis.
Be sincere.
Be patient and courteous.
Exercise sound judgment.
Size up the customer intelligently.

Is it not clear that the task of mastering even this incomplete list of rules for sales improvement is tremendously difficult? In fact it would probably take a lifetime to put into practice all these admonitions. The salesman faces a far more difficult program than does the student of mathematics or typing.

Importance of Conduct Training in Selling.

The chief reason, however, for the difficulty in improving one's selling lies in the fact that the most important avenues of improvement involve changes in personality and in conduct. We should not ignore the importance of giving the salesman knowledge of his proposition and skill in presenting it, but the truth is that at bottom improvement in selling depends upon improving selling behavior.

Many facts bear out this statement. For example, a study was made to determine what qualities sales managers most desire in applicants for selling positions.[1] Sales help-wanted advertisements were studied for a period of six months, and it was discovered that the qualities or equip-

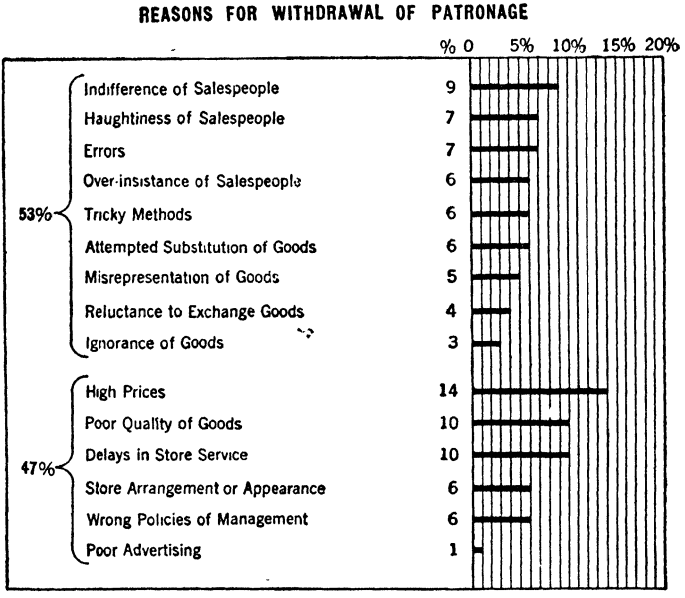

FIG. 5.—Showing why 4,407 customers quit trading at certain stores. (*Adapted from Bulletin of Bureau of Business Research, School of Business Administration, University of Oregon*, 1924.)

ment frequently mentioned were those having to do with the behavior traits of the individual. There was great demand for men with "persistence," "aggressiveness," "good personality," and the like. Sales managers are generally agreed that it is comparatively easy to teach the salesman the necessary knowledge of the product, territory, organization, and so on, but all this is relatively unimportant as compared with the task of teaching him the proper selling habits, such as courtesy, persistence, and neatness.

[1] See Chap. IX.

Another way of showing the importance of character traits in selling is through lists of criticisms of salesmen. Such studies have always shown that the most frequent comments are directed at deficiencies in conduct rather than at deficiencies in knowledge.

Still another angle of approach is through the study of the reasons for lost sales or customers. The Bureau of Business Research of the University of Oregon made a survey of the reasons why customers quit trading at certain stores. Over 50 per cent of these reasons were classified as due to some unfortunate behavior on the part of the salesman, such as tactlessness, inattention, and failure to appreciate the customer's point of view.

To summarize these lines of evidence, we may say that *in learning to sell, the biggest problem is to acquire correct sales habits and attitudes.*

Why Acquiring Better Selling Habits Is Difficult.

To recognize this problem is merely a first step. The real question is *how* to acquire this better selling behavior. Although not generally recognized as such, this is one of the most difficult things in all education.

In the first place all of us have a multitude of bad selling practices. It is hard to escape from these hindering habits, because most of them have been very firmly established by long use. Much of our social behavior was acquired in childhood. There have been hundreds of repetitions to stamp in the wrong reaction—the timidity, the fear, the tactlessness, and so on. There is reason to assume that to change an already existing way of acting takes as much energy as went into its building. That is, if you have repeated a certain inefficient sales practice a thousand times, then to overcome it will require a thousand equally strong repetitions of the good conduct, or five hundred repetitions of twice as much intensity, or two hundred and fifty repetitions of four times the intensity, and so forth.

A good way to demonstrate the strength of these existing reaction patterns is to try to change some simple habit, such as that of carrying the watch or keys in a certain pocket, putting one shoe on before the other, hanging the toothbrush on a certain hook. It will be found that once any of these commonplace reactions is firmly fixed, it takes a considerable period of effort and attention before the substitute reaction becomes easy and familiar. If this is true of these relatively mechanical performances, we may certainly expect still more difficulty when we attempt to alter more complex sales behavior.

A second cause of difficulty in changing present sales habits arises from the fact that they not only are very old and well established but unfortunately are also bearable. They are comfortable. They are like an old pair of shoes which we hate to give up because we know that the new pair will not be so easy to wear. Any change in our present routine requires effort and is likely to be somewhat painful. Thus it is easy to relapse in any attempt at reform.

In the third place, our present stock of sales habits is not only well established and comfortable but workable. We are much like the individual who has learned to type-write by the two-finger, peck-and-hunt method. He knows, perhaps, that he ought to change to the more efficient touch system, but it is hard for him to do this because he must first pass through a period of slow progress. For a long time his old method will get the work out quicker than the ultimately more efficient method. Whenever he is hurried the individual is almost sure to lapse into the old and practiced way.

Customary Methods of Changing Sales Behavior. Resolution.

Not only is the changing of sales behavior difficult, but the methods that are available for our use are not especially efficient. That most widely depended upon and probably the least dependable is commonly called *resolution*. People have a childish belief that if they merely resolve to change

their conduct, the desired improvement will magically come to pass. They become convinced through reading or through sales lectures that a certain element in their personality is bad. They resolve to change it. Such a resolution is much like those which people are accustomed to make at New Year's. Everyone knows how few of these aspirations ever become consolidated into useful habits.

One strong reason for the inefficiency of the resolution method is the fact that in order to change our conduct we must *practice* the improved way of acting and it frequently happens that before we have time to act on a resolution, we forget all about it. Take, for example, the list of admonitions quoted on page 97. Most people in reading this list are reminded of something that they might profitably apply. They resolve to adopt some of these suggestions. Within 10 minutes—the time taken to read these intervening pages—they have, unfortunately, forgotten about their impulse to self-improvement. Of one group of salesmen who read this list carefully, not one man could recall more than half of the recommendations a week later.

The experiences of companies in training salesmen illustrate the same point. For example, a salesman attends a sales meeting and, under the inspiration of the manager's talk, resolves to make a change in his selling methods. By the next morning, however, his good impulses have cooled off; other duties demand his attention; and he forgets all about his program of self-improvement.

Changing Sales Habits by Exhortation.

Another method that is widely used in attempts to improve salesmen is the preacher's method—exhortation. Sometimes a large quantity of inspirational literature is added. Here is a sample from the material sent out by a book company to inspire its office-to-office canvassers:

SMILE—WHY NOT? TODAY may be another one of the BIG days of your life—you may HIT upon a new way of presenting the proposition—you may interview and SELL more prospects than you

ever DREAMED possible—you may make a GREAT SALES RECORD.

You never CAN tell—and so long as you don't KNOW just WHAT success WILL be YOURS today—FIX your MIND on SUCCESS and MORE SALES and GREATER EARNINGS.

Let the other fellow be content if he WANTS to—thinking of GLOOM and FAILURE and LOST SALES.

SMILE and THINK SUCCESS. That's the SECRET of SUCCESS. THINK success! BELIEVE success! TALK success! And SMILE, why not?

Weak and discouraged salesmen may show an improvement as a result of such "pep" literature. Certainly it has been widely used, although its use now seems to be decreasing. The great trouble is that it ordinarily produces little permanent effect. It is like a temporary stimulant. The salesman who is much subjected to this sort of thing becomes like the oft-converted, oft-back-sliding sinner. The old way is bearable; it is hard to change; the glowing effect of the sermon is soon lost.

Reward and Punishment.

Much of our learning occurs under the spur of those two great guides to improvement, *reward* and *punishment.* This is especially true in childhood, when we are rapidly acquiring our behavior habits. Unfortunately, by the time we are old enough to become salesmen, many of our ways of behaving are pretty well fixed, and neither the promise of huge rewards nor the fear of punishment is able to make much impression.

A part of the difficulty comes from the fact that as adults our rewards and punishments are apt to be somewhere in the vague future. We know that if we improve our sales methods, we shall make more money; but we find ourselves moving along somewhat comfortably, and the effort required to secure this distant reward or to avoid the punishment for failure is ordinarily too great, and the goal is too far away.

Practical Plans for Sales-conduct Training.

It should be clear from what we have just said that there is a real need for careful study of this problem of training in selling habits. We need something better than the ordinary methods of resolution, reward and punishment, inspiration, and exhortation.

Analysis will show that this problem really breaks down into three smaller problems, which are

1. The problem of securing strong motives for improvement in selling efficiency.
2. The problem of establishing a sensible and attainable goal.
3. The problem of systematic and continued practice of the improved sales behavior.

The problem of motive is of the first importance. Our selling habits flow out from and are formed in the service of our strong natural desires. Take any habit, and trace it back to its origin; it will be discovered that at the time of its beginning it served some fundamental wish better than any other way of acting. Consider, for example, the nervous gestures that are habitual with many salesmen and frequently create an impression of weakness. These were originally outlets for energy liberated by emotionally exciting situations. By long practice they became habitual. So with any other sales habit—aggressiveness, tact, energy, friendliness. Habits are the servants of desire.

It follows that the first step in the formation of a new sales habit or attitude is to make sure that it is backed up by some strong, permanent want. Almost any reaction can be established if the salesman can remain tremendously interested in it. Interest, in turn, rests upon the presence of strong motives.

There are a number of practical devices that may be used to tie the proposed improvements in selling methods up with the salesman's motives. Here are the most important:

1. *Rivalry.*—Enter into competition with some other salesman in the pursuit of better sales habits. Make losing costly.

2. *Responsibilities.*—Assume responsibilities, financial, social, or moral, that demand the improvement of sales behavior.

3. *Self-respect.*—Having decided on a program of self-improvement in selling, make it a matter of pride to carry through that program.

4. *The Blocked Retreat.*—Burn the bridges, so that it is impossible to go back to the old way of acting.

5. *The Public Commitment.*—Take a public pledge. Arrange matters so that failure to acquire the proposed sales improvement will involve a serious loss of prestige.

Establishing a Goal for Sales Training.

Not only must the salesman have a strong and steadfast motive for improvement, but if he is to accomplish much by his efforts he must also have a clearly defined goal toward which he is aiming. A vast amount of waste motion in sales improvement occurs because the salesman has but a vague idea of what he wants to accomplish. Really important things are neglected, while unimportant details are attacked with feverish energy.

The first step in establishing the goal is a careful study of the good and weak points of the particular salesman as related to his specific line of selling. Each salesman presents an individual problem. There are no mass prescriptions that may be administered wholesale to all salesmen; we must start by finding out what the individual needs. This can be determined only by self-analysis and, in some cases, after careful study by an outside expert.

Sometimes a simple questionnaire such as that shown in Fig. 6 may be of aid in getting a picture of the salesman's characteristics. This form was used with a large group, each man passing judgment on every other man in the

group. The ratings of all the judges were then combined to give a composite rating for each salesman.

SALESMAN'S RATING FOR FIRST IMPRESSION

Salesman's name_____ Judge's name_____

To the Interviewer:

Here are some statements regarding the man you have just interviewed. The object of this record is to give a general notion of the first impression created by this salesman. Read each statement and if you think it is true, make a circle around "Yes." If false, make a circle around "No." Do not circle the "?" unless you find it absolutely impossible to classify him otherwise. It is understood that this is merely your judgment on first impression and that you might change your opinion after a longer acquaintance.

Yes	No	?	I think this man will succeed as a salesman.
Yes	No	?	He impressed me as being well dressed.
Yes	No	?	He created the impression of prosperity.
Yes	No	?	He seemed well educated.
Yes	No	?	He seemed above average in intelligence.
Yes	No	?	He was easy to get acquainted with.
Yes	No	?	His manner was pleasing.
Yes	No	?	I feel quite sure that he is absolutely honest.
Yes	No	?	I feel that he is dependable.
Yes	No	?	I believe most people would like him.
Yes	No	?	I believe he would stick at a hard job to the end.
Yes	No	?	I believe he usually gets what he goes after.
Yes	No	?	He seems to have plenty of confidence in himself.
Yes	No	?	He seems ambitious.
Yes	No	?	He gives the impression of energy.
Yes	No	?	He seems healthy.
Yes	No	?	He seems cheerful.
Yes	No	?	He seems calm and self-controlled.
Yes	No	?	He seems capable and efficient.
Yes	No	?	He seems to have a pleasing disposition.
Yes	No	?	He meets people well.
Yes	No	?	He gives the impression of culture, good manners.
Yes	No	?	His voice is pleasing.
Yes	No	?	His conversation is appropriate, to the point.
Yes	No	?	His movements and gestures are graceful.
Yes	No	?	His language is good.
Yes	No	?	I think he is probably a good mixer.
Yes	No	?	He seems to me to have a strong personality.
Yes	No	?	I think he could meet important men successfully.
Yes	No	?	In general he creates a good impression.

FIG. 6.—A method used in rating the impression created by the salesman.

This particular form was used principally to give some idea of the first impression created by the salesman. In a similar way, rating methods may be used to bring out many important facts that the salesman does not suspect about himself. It is a good plan for him to go over these

facts with a sympathetic outsider who can explain the ratings and make suggestions for improvement. This will help the salesman set up a definite objective instead of blundering aimlessly in the dark.

Analysis of the Salesman's Job.

Another method of establishing definite goals is to make what is sometimes called a "job analysis," deciding exactly what the salesman has to do in order to be successful, what habits are important in accomplishing these aims, and which of these habits the salesman does or does not possess.

A chart prepared by a specialty salesman will give a good idea of how this kind of analysis is conducted. This man sells to business executives and has certain personal problems arising from his type of selling. He diagnosed his own case thus:

MY SIX AIMS AND THE HABITS I MUST HAVE TO ACCOMPLISH THOSE AIMS

(By a Specialty Salesman)

1. *To Get In to See My Prospect:*
   - *a.* Habit of energetic seeking of appointments
   - *b.* Habit of aggressiveness in seeking entrance
   - *c.* Habit of tact in seeking entrance
   - *d.* Habit of persistence in seeking entrance

2. *To Make the Prospect Give Me His Attention:*
   - *a.* Habit of use of gestures, illustrations, changing voice
   - *b.* Habit of thinking of the prospect's interests and appealing to them

3. *To Make the Prospect Respect Me:*
   - *a.* Habit of looking the prospect in the eye
   - *b.* Habit of dignity, absence of nervousness
   - *c.* Habit of energy
   - *d.* Habit of enthusiasm
   - *e.* Habit of self-confidence
   - *f.* Habit of sincerity
   - *g.* Habit of neatness and appearance of prosperity
   - *h.* Habit of thinking of myself as a leader

4. *To Make My Prospect Understand Me:*
   a. Habit of distinct, clear speech
   b. Habit of graphic, clear-cut illustration
   c. Habit of simple, direct expression

5. *To Make the Prospect Like Me:*
   a. Habit of tact
   b. Habit of consideration of the other man
   c. Habit of cheerfulness
   d. Habit of deference to prospect in matters in which he thinks himself an expert
   e. Habit of sincerity
   f. Habit of friendliness

6. *To Make the Prospect Act for Me:*
   a. Habit of use of suggestion
   b. Habit of appeal to instincts, emotions, and strong habits
   c. Habit of logical demonstration

Salesmen in other lines would, of course, need a very different set of objectives, and each individual would require a different set of habits in order to accomplish his aims. For this reason it is important that each man should prepare for himself a personal list of sales aims and a careful analysis of the performance traits necessary to the successful accomplishment of these aims. Only in this way can he gain a clear idea of the road that he must travel in order to become a better salesman.

Selecting a Selling Style.

No two salesmen are alike. Each must develop along the line of his special abilities, not along the hard-and-fast lines laid down in a book of rules. Enthusiastic sales managers sometimes overlook this point and try to mold all their men into their own image or the image of some outstanding member of the organization.

Such attempts to fit a salesman to a preconceived formula start from the wrong end. They ignore the fact that there are selling styles just as there are styles in clothing. Actors

know that not every actor can play "Hamlet." It is not expected that all doctors will become skilled surgeons. Like the actor and the doctor and the lawyer, the salesman should discover his natural style and stick to it.

For practical purposes it is possible to list five selling styles in general use. There are other styles and combinations of styles, but the following are most common:

1. *The Sales-ambassador Style of Selling.*—Some men are naturally dignified, impressive, important looking. They are fitted for the *negotiator* or *ambassadorial* style of selling. They are at ease with corporation presidents, bank officers, and other important executives.

2. *The High-pressure Style of Selling.*—There are men who are naturally dominant, aggressive, forceful in their dealings with others. They are not sensitive to rebuffs and are fitted for selling that must overcome great resistance.

3. *The Personal-friendship Style of Selling.*—For some men the easy, friendly, familiar style of selling is most natural. They attract people by their cheerful, sympathetic, entertaining manner. Customers buy from them because they like them.

4. *The Service Style of Selling.*—Some men are naturally attentive, courteous, adaptable. They sell by rendering appealing service.

5. *The Order-taking Style.*—Some men are best fitted for the simple, matter-of-fact business of taking orders. They may be very efficient clerks if required to handle only staple products that do not need much explanation.

Self-analysis will suggest to the salesman which of these selling styles best fits his personality. The unbiased judgment of another person may also help in deciding this point. Having discovered this natural style, the next step is to develop to the fullest the innate capacities thus suggested. Experience shows that this method is far more likely to be successful than the usual process of trying to make over the whole individual to suit some fixed idea of what constitutes the ideal salesman.

Improvement through Systematic and Continued Practice.

Even with a strong motive and a clear goal the salesman will not progress far in his attempt at self-improvement if he fails to *practice*. We learn by doing. Real growth comes only as the result of systematic effort.

The salesman here encounters a special difficulty. Practicing sales habits is quite unlike practicing music or a history lesson. It is usually impossible to get the over-and-over-again kind of repetition that helps so much in the fixation of other types of learning.

For example, how could a salesman practice being tactful? Certainly no method of rote repetition is available for him. He cannot practice tact as he would practice hitting a golf ball in a certain way. Yet for the tactless salesman to become tactful is probably harder than for him to eliminate a bad stroke in golf.

There are, fortunately, certain rules that will be of aid to the salesman who really desires to improve. The more important are:

1. Seize every opportunity for practice of the desired sales habit. Practice with friends, with chance acquaintances, with every customer.
2. Never allow yourself to relapse into the old way.
3. Rehearse the improved sales behavior in imagination as an actor rehearses a scene.
4. Keep a record of improvement.
5. Continue practice until success comes. Never give up. The most important habit that you can form is that of finishing whatever you attempt.

In practicing a sales habit it is important to keep in mind the fact that habits are reactions made to specific situations. There must always be a stimulus to set going the mechanism of the habit. Thus the presence of food may set in operation our eating habits; the sight of a smiling face may make us smile in sympathy; the sound of the national anthem may make us stand at attention. In the same way every word or movement of the prospect tends to produce corresponding habitual responses in the salesman.

In planning to acquire a new sales habit it is vital to select some dependable stimulus with which the habit is to be linked by practice. Until this tie-up is perfect, there is great danger that the salesman will slip back into the old way. As a matter of fact, failure to establish these habit reminders is the most common reason for failure to carry out good resolutions. The salesman says that he "forgets." He does not really forget the resolution. He simply is not reminded of it at the right time. To avoid this difficulty, decide on a situation that is sure to occur in the sale and peg the habitual response to it. We employ the same principle when we tie a string around our finger or use some other reminder to make us remember to perform an act at a certain time. The salesman should work out for himself a similar reminder system in connection with each sales habit that he wishes to acquire.

Concentrating on Fundamental Principles.

It is easy to make the study of salesmanship seem complicated—so complicated that the beginner loses heart. We must avoid this difficulty, and the simplest way is to set up a number of easily remembered sales principles around which our study may be organized. These principles must be comprehensive enough to cover the whole field of selling. They must apply to all kinds of salesmen. They must be useful under all conditions. They must be clear and easily mastered yet so significant that they stimulate to further thought. They must be within the power of the beginner to apply yet useful to the most experienced. Above all, they must leave the salesman free to develop along the lines of his own personality.

It is not an easy task to draw up a list of principles that will meet all these specifications. It requires the painstaking analysis of the experiences and opinions of hundreds of salesmen and of competent writers on salesmanship. Out of such a study certain points of agreement appear. The language in which such generalizations are stated will

vary, but the following will be found to be generally accepted.

PRINCIPLES OF CONSTRUCTIVE SELLING

1. *Secure Adequate Preparation.*—Good selling establishes a sound foundation for the sale by securing adequate preparation.

2. *Build Acceptance.*—Good selling builds customer acceptance, not resistance, by considering the customer's point of view.

3. *Arouse Buying Attitude.*—Good selling arouses and fosters the buying attitude by showing the customer how to satisfy a want or a need or a desire.

4. *Keep the Selling Attitude.*—Good selling maintains the selling attitude by concentrating upon the main objective—the sale.

5. *Dramatize the Proposition.*—Good selling lifts the product out of the commonplace by presenting a novel and appealing selling point.

6. *Induce Favorable Classification.*—Good selling secures favorable classification of the salesman and his product by focusing attention upon the favorable aspects.

7. *Supply Buying Reasons.*—Good selling satisfies the customer's need for conviction by supplying logically adequate reasons for buying.

8. *Remove Sales Obstacles.*—Good selling clears the way for decision by removing the obstacles to the sale.

9. *Move to Action.*—Good selling induces decision and action by the skillful use of suggestion and persuasion.

These principles cover the two important lines of activity in the sale—what the customer does and what the salesman does. They indicate the general sequence of events in the sale without falling into the limitations of the older formula which laid down the psychological steps of *attention, interest, desire, confidence, decision, action,* and *satisfaction.* The full scope of these principles may not be apparent at first reading. Only by the analysis of many sales will it be dis-

covered that one or more of these fundamentals are employed by the salesman in every successful transaction.

These principles are explained and illustrated in later chapters. They form the central theme of our discussion. In the meantime the ambitious student need not delay their application. They are so basic to all selling that they may be put to work in the next sales interview.

Making Good Sales Methods Unconscious.

In the preceding pages there has been presented a point of view that may seem new to some salesmen. Many students have assumed that the study of selling must be based upon training in tricks, stunts, and stratagems by which the customer is maneuvered into buying against his will. This view of sales training is partial. It is out of line with present-day thought about selling. In the final analysis the only way to be a better salesman is to be a better man—to have better selling methods so firmly grounded in habit that they are automatic. In the thick of the sale the salesman cannot be distracted by having to think about his methods. Conscious use of sales tricks is almost sure to give an awkward impression, to make the salesman seem like a second-rate actor self-consciously practicing gestures. To be efficient, selling methods must be so habitual that neither the salesman nor the customer is conscious of them.

The only way to this state of effortless mastery is through practice—practice as conscientious as that of the musician or the sportsman. There is no magic formula, no short cut that will overnight transform the crude beginner into the expert. Improvement in selling ability, like any other improvement, has its price. It requires effort. The student salesman should know this in advance.

Questions and Exercises

1. Discuss this statement: You cannot learn salesmanship by reading a book.

2. Should a salesman attempt to change his natural selling style?

3. Present a list of things to be accomplished by a salesman selling a specific line and a list of habits that would be helpful in accomplishing these aims.

4. Why is it usually harder to acquire a new habit of conduct than to acquire information or skill?

5. Report your experience in changing some minor habit, such as that of carrying the watch in a certain pocket.

6. Why do salesmen frequently fail to carry out their good resolutions?

7. What principles of effective selling are enumerated in this text? Reproduce this list from memory.

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CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE—ADEQUATE PREPARATION

In the last chapter we stressed the need for general preparation for selling. In this chapter we shall be dealing with the need for specific preparation for the sale. So important is this subject that we embody it in the first of our principles of sound selling. No matter in what line the salesman may be, common sense demands that he have thorough preparation.

What Adequate Sales Preparation Accomplishes.

Adequate preparation is important because it gives the salesman *self-confidence.* A few salesmen may be able to feel at ease when discussing goods about which they know but little. Most salesmen, however, are seriously handicapped by the feeling that they do not know all about their proposition.

Adequate preparation also *creates confidence.* It does not take the customer long to discover whether the salesman knows what he is talking about or not. The customer naturally hesitates to buy from the man who does not know his business.

Adequate preparation thus *increases sales.* The Blackman Company in an investigation of the value of sales schools found that 43.8 per cent more business was written during their first year by men who had graduated from the Equitable Life Assurance Society's field schools than by men who had not attended the schools. A class of 244 men, graduated from the National Cash Register Company's sales school, averaged 87 points per man for 2 months in the field, compared with an average of 28 points per man before the schooling. Another instance showed an increase

of 70 per cent in production for the first 9 months after the school.[1] Aspley cites several similar examples and declares that training usually results in an increase in the earnings of individual salesmen of from 25 to 100 per cent.[2] Nolen and Maynard conclude that "sales training has proved its worth by generating certain specific gains when it is properly conducted."[3]

That leaders in sales training are aware of the importance of adequate preparation is shown by the fact that of all the principles of selling this is the one most universally mentioned in books on salesmanship. Sales managers also recognize the importance of the subject. In a survey of the qualities valuable in selling, 300 executives responded to a questionnaire, and of the qualities mentioned, "knowledge of the goods" easily ranked first in number of votes received.[4]

Such evidence might be multiplied indefinitely. From the point of view of the salesman, of the company, and of the customer, adequate sales preparation is of vital importance.

What Does Adequate Preparation Involve?

The term *adequate preparation* is somewhat general, and salesmen may fall into the error of thinking that they are satisfactorily equipped when they are not. It therefore will be a good thing to list the principal points that should be included in the course of study of the average salesman. It is to be understood, of course, that this is a general list and that the individual may not need to cover all of these or he may need to add to the list in order to meet his particular sales problem.

[1] From "Educating Salesmen," p. 10, The Blackman Company, New York, 1926.

[2] ASPLEY, JOHN CAMERON, ed., "The Sales Manager's Handbook," 3d ed., p. 427, Dartnell Corp., Chicago, 1940.

[3] NOLEN, HERMAN C., and HAROLD M. MAYNARD, "Sales Management," p. 203, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1940.

[4] LEE, GEORGE W., *Sales Management*, April, 1921.

CHECK LIST FOR TEST OF ADEQUATE PREPARATION

——Do you have a clear idea of your duties as a salesman?

——Do you possess all information commonly used by successful salesmen in the presentation of your product?

——Are you prepared to give a clear, logical, convincing, and persuasive sales talk?

——Do you have a practical plan for securing contact with possible customers?

——Do you have a practical work schedule that will enable you to accomplish maximum results in the least possible time?

——Do you have a systematic program of study that will lead to greater and greater mastery of your work?

The salesman who can truthfully give an affirmative answer to all these questions is certainly on the way to a satisfactory preparation for his selling tasks.

Analysis of the Salesman's Duties.

The first step in any undertaking is to secure a clear idea of the nature of the task. In Chapter V we mentioned the desirability of an analysis of the objectives in the sale and an enumeration of the sales habits necessary to the accomplishment of those aims. Another desirable type of analysis has to do with the salesman's duties, sometimes called a "job analysis." Ordinarily this is made by the management rather than by the employee, but most salesmen can profit by attempting such an outline for themselves. The following specimen as given by Kenagy and Yoakum may be used as a guide. Note that the tasks to be listed would vary widely, depending upon the type of selling and the established practices of the sales organization.

OUTLINE OF SALESMAN'S WORK[1]

1. *Making the Sale:*
   - *a.* Gets acquainted with the prospect and gathers information concerning him
   - *b.* Plans the interview
   - *c.* Analyzes the prospect's needs
   - *d.* Demonstrates
   - *e.* Presents facts and reasons; answers objections
   - *f.* Appeals to buying motives during the interview
   - *g.* Fights competition
   - *h.* Writes sales letters and written propositions to be submitted
   - *i.* Creates good will toward himself by talking on topics not related to the sale of his product
   - *j.* Solicits signed orders
   - *k.* Makes collections; determines prospect's credit rating
   - *l.* Helps other salesmen

2. *Routine Duties:*
   - *a.* Follows instructions
   - *b.* Makes reports
   - *c.* Keeps records
   - *d.* Takes proper care of his equipment and stock
   - *e.* Keeps himself informed concerning latest prices, changes in product, and so forth

3. *Service:*
   - *a.* Installs his product
   - *b.* Trains operators
   - *c.* Trains dealers to resell
   - *d.* Helps dealers to resell

4. *Executive Duties:*
   - *a.* Plans the day's work
   - *b.* Plans ahead
   - *c.* Supervises the work of his assistant salesmen
   - *d.* Develops self-initiative by taking care of his health, by associating with successful salesmen, by studying, and by reading inspirational literature, and so on
   - *e.* Observes facts in his territory that have a bearing on the sale of his product

[1] KENAGY, H. G., and C. S. YOAKUM, "The Selection and Training of Salesmen," p. 79, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1925.

f. Gathers local sales arguments
g. Works out new ideas, and makes suggestions to superiors

5. *Creating of Good Will toward Himself and His Company:*
   a. Renders good will services that are not related to the sale of his product
   b. Adjusts complaints and grievances
   c. Participates in social affairs of community
   d. Boosts his company

For the beginning salesman especially, such an analysis will serve to give a clearer idea of what is to be done and will suggest steps in preparation that might otherwise be overlooked.

Duties of Retail Salespersons.

A description of the work of retail-store employees has been prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor.[1] That analysis, somewhat condensed, is as follows:

TYPICAL DUTIES PERFORMED BY SALESPERSONS

A. Determines merchandise desired by customer. Ascertains make, type, size, pattern or design, and quantity wanted and approximate price that the customer is willing to pay

B. Displays merchandise, and assists customer to make a selection by suggestions and explanations. Emphasizes the chief selling point of the article, be it quality, style, durability, popularity, utility, taste, appearance, freshness, or price; may tell or show the customer how to use the article; attempts to encourage the sale of higher priced articles . . . every attempt is made to suggest articles that might be used in connection with the article purchased

C. Writes out sales slip in duplicate or triplicate

D. Receives payment, or secures credit authorization; gives wrapped article to customer, or arranges for its delivery:
   1. If sale is cash, receives money
      a. Wraps article, rings up sale on a cash register, and makes change
      b. Gives article to a cashier-wrapper who makes change and wraps article
      c. Sends money and sales slips to a central (cashier's office) via a pneumatic tube system or an overhead carrier

[1] "Job Descriptions for the Retail Trade," Vol. III, p. 577, United States Employment Service, Department of Labor, 1938.

2. If sale is to be charged
   a. Sends sales slips to credit department via pneumatic tube system or an overhead carrier for approval of account and return
   b. Places sales slips in holder of charge phone, presses signal button to call credit authorizer, verbally gives name and address of customer, and removes sales slips from holder when they have been stamped
   c. Procures written approval of account by floorman or department manager

E. Cares for stock on sales floor. Places new merchandise on shelves, racks, or stands according to a predetermined order; keeps stock neat, orderly, and dusted during the day, requisitioning replacements of staple articles of merchandise from stockroom as necessary or informing buyer or department head of shortages as they occur; may cover stock or remove it from counters at night; at end of day fills out a merchandise order slip or want slip recording, for the information of the buyer, articles of merchandise called for by customers but not carried in stock and merchandise the stock of which is running low

F. Writes out accommodation slips (in cases where merchandise is returned by the customer for alteration, repair, or some other reason but where the customer retains ownership of the merchandise), indicating the disposition of the merchandise and whether the alteration or repair is a free service or will be charged to the customer

G. May trim showcases on sales floor according to directions of department head or window trimmer

H. Takes periodic inventories of stock, calling out items to another worker who records them on an inventory sheet

Information Necessary to Effective Selling.

If there is one point on which the authorities are in agreement, it is that the salesman must possess a background of necessary information about the product, the company, and the customer. This point is so obvious that it needs little comment. In spite of this, however, many salesmen fail to supply themselves with all the facts that they should have.

Perhaps one reason why salesmen do not know so much as they should about their work is that they do not have a very clear idea of what they ought to know. It will help

the average salesman to have before him a fairly comprehensive list of the things that he should investigate. The check list of questions (pages 121–122) about the various phases of the salesman's background is presented for the purpose of encouraging thought on the subject. It is not a complete list for every possible product, and many of the points do not apply to all products; it is nevertheless valuable as a source of suggestions.

Even the experienced salesman will find it helpful to check his knowledge against a list such as this in order to make sure that he is not overlooking an item that might be turned into a sales argument for his product. For the beginner, with little idea of what he should know about the proposition, the list will serve as a useful guide.

The Sales Talk.

An important item in the salesman's equipment is the sales talk. Most talks are not prepared; they just happen. The average salesman picks up a few ideas about the product and the company and then goes out to call upon prospects or, in the case of retail selling, waits for customers to enter the store. Face to face with the customer, he talks pretty much at random. Usually he begins by reciting the good points of the article that he is selling. After that the interview is in the hands of the customer, who buys or refuses to buy.

Of course, this haphazard approach to selling is wasteful and inefficient. Realizing this, sales managers frequently try to give the beginner a better start by sending him out with a successful salesman whose methods he is to observe and imitate. This has advantages as compared with the haphazard method, but it is not free of dangers. It sometimes happens that the salesman-teacher has a talk that is adapted to his own selling style but unsuited to that of the beginner.

Another common practice is the group demonstration, in which the sales manager or a successful salesman stages

Check List for Test of Background Knowledge of Sales Proposition

——Can you give a clear *picture of your product* with regard to such of the following points as apply?
- ——Appearance.
- ——Grades.
- ——Sizes.
- ——Styles.
- ——Designs.
- ——Finishes.
- ——Patterns.
- ——Qualities.
- ——Colors.

——Can you give a complete list of the *points of superiority* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
- ——Durability.
- ——Utility.
- ——Construction.
- ——Economy.
- ——Convenience.
- ——Service.
- ——Safety.
- ——Cleanliness.
- ——Wholesomeness.
- ——Taste.
- ——Value.
- ——Availability.
- ——Exclusiveness.
- ——Prestige
- ——Recommendation.
- ——Guarantee.
- ——Pleasingness.
- ——Satisfaction.
- ——Comfort.
- ——Health.
- ——Beauty.

——Can you give a clear exposition of the *uses* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
- ——List of uses.
- ——Advantages of use.
- ——How used
- ——When used
- ——Where used.
- ——By whom used.
- ——Special or unusual uses.

——Are you familiar with all important facts in connection with the *manufacture* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
- ——Location of factory.
- ——Equipment of factory.
- ——Capacity of factory.
- ——Volume of factory.
- ——Materials used.
- ——Source of materials.
- ——Reason for use of materials.
- ——Manufacturing processes employed.
- ——Special or exclusive processes.
- ——Workmanship employed.
- ——Personnel of factory.
- ——Standards maintained.
- ——Inspection and testing methods.

——Are you familiar with all important facts in connection with the *care, servicing,* and *replacement* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
- ——Frequency of need for servicing, care, or repairs.
- ——Methods of servicing.
- ——Cautions with regard to use.
- ——Method of securing repair parts.
- ——Service facilities supplied by company.

——Are you familiar with all important facts in connection with *prices, profits,* and *credits,* including such of the following as apply?
- ——Price to consumer.
- ——Price to retailer.
- ——Price to jobber, wholesaler, or other middlemen.
- ——Reasons for high or low price.

CHECK LIST FOR TEST OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF SALES PROPOSITION (*Continued*)

——Comparative prices.
——Price maintenance policy of company.
——Profits per unit.
——Rate of turnover.
——Comparative profits.
——Regular discounts.
——Special discounts.
——Special deals offered.
——Quantity prices.
——Allowances.
——Contracts.
——Credit terms.
——Installment provisions.

——Are you familiar with all important facts in connection with the *delivery* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
——Provisions for delivery.
——Methods of delivery.
——Time required for delivery.
——Information necessary for delivery.

——Are you familiar with all important facts in connection with the *distribution* of your product, including such of the following as apply?
——Sections of country in which product may be purchased.
——Stocks usually carried.
——Trade channels through which distributed.
——Reasons for use of method of distribution.
——Kinds of dealers.
——Trade traditions and practices.
——Routine of handling distribution.

——Are you familiar with all important points in connection with the *sales methods* of the company, including such of the following as apply?
——Nature of sales organization.
——Sales policies.
——Sales routine.
——Advertising as related to work of sales organization.

——Are you familiar with all important points in connection with your *customers*, including such of the following as apply?
——Location of customers.
——Frequency of purchase.
——Amount purchased.
——Time of purchase.
——By whom is purchase made.
——From whom is purchase usually made.
——Buying practices.
——Buying power.
——Credit rating.
——Preferences.
——Prejudices.
——Attitudes.
——Temperament.
——Beliefs.
——Convictions.
——Hobbies.
——Education.
——Needs.
——Wants and desires.
——Buying motives.

——Are you familiar with all important points in connection with *competing products*, including such of the following as apply?
——Prices and values.
——Reputation.
——Sales policies.
——Advantages and weaknesses.
——Volume of business.

——Are you familiar with all important points in connection with the *industry*, including such of the following as apply?
——History.
——Development.
——General conditions.
——Trends.

a sales interview for the benefit of the new man. Properly handled this method has many advantages.

Still another device is the prepared sales talk, provided by the organization, to be memorized by each beginning salesman. There has been much debate for and against this procedure. The principal arguments may be summarized as follows:

For the Standardized Sales Talk	Against the Standardized Sales Talk
1. It gives salesman feeling of confidence.	1. Set talk sounds forced and unnatural.
2. It provides a better talk than the salesman could prepare for himself.	2. Set talk irritates or amuses the customer.
3. It saves time.	3. Set talk cannot be changed to suit individual customer.
4. It ensures a thorough presentation of the proposition.	4. Set talk makes salesman self-conscious and kills his initiative.
5. It guides interview along right lines.	5. Set talk is not adapted to many kinds of selling.

Many companies today secure most of the advantages and avoid some of the disadvantages by providing a standard talk that the salesman is expected to master but not to follow slavishly. This seems sensible. The salesman should be given various models for study but be encouraged to adapt the material to his own peculiarities.

Preparing the Sales Talk.

Many salesmen are left much to their own devices in the preparation of a sales talk, and for them an outline of steps to be followed will be helpful. These suggestions should be considered:

First, saturate yourself with all available information about your proposition, the company, the customer, the conditions of the sale, and so on. The outline given elsewhere in this chapter will be helpful on this point.

Second, listen to demonstration talks by other salesmen selling your line and read any sample talks that may be available.

Third, analyze what your selling talk must accomplish. Ask yourself the following:

A. What must my customer know before he will buy?
B. What must my customer believe before he will buy?
C. How must he feel about the proposition before he will buy?
D. What obstacles must be removed before he will buy?
E. What methods do I have for inducing these desired reactions in my customer?

Fourth, plan and replan a sales talk that will accomplish the objectives just outlined. Write this plan out in detail, setting down the exact words to be used at important points.

Fifth, memorize the important elements in this sales talk, including the introduction, the demonstration, forceful expressions, powerful arguments, convincing comparisons, impressive statistics, useful illustrations, and ready-made answers to objections. Have in mind a general plan of presentation but be ready to vary the talk to suit the occasion and the customer.

Sixth, practice the sales talk in private; then deliver it to someone qualified to criticize it, such as the sales manager or another salesman.

Seventh, constantly strive to better the talk by adding any expression or procedure that seems an improvement. Do not allow your talk to become fixed. Try to find the one best way for you to present your proposition.

Prospecting Methods.

The next step in preparation for selling is to devise a method for securing contact with possible customers. This is not important for the retail salesman, and in some other types of selling the salesman does not have to pay much attention to this detail. In canvassing, however, and to some degree in selling to retailers and middlemen and pur-

chasing agents, this problem may be troublesome and the salesman without a sound plan is greatly handicapped.

Ordinarily the salesman ought to know the names of possible customers and something of their situation as related to the purchase of goods. In some cases extremely detailed information is required, and weeks may be spent in locating a logical buyer and in securing all necessary preliminary knowledge before attempting an interview. A typical illustration of this kind of selling is afforded by an insurance agent specializing in the sale of large policies to wealthy men. Here is his plan.

Name: George R. Baker.
Address: 192 Broadway.
Position: General manager, The Jones Products Co.
Rating: A1.
Income: $50,000. *Personal:* $85,000; *Real:* $75,000.
Family: Wife, 2 children (boy and girl) 8 and 6 years.
Associations: Influential in carbon products circles.
Hobbies: Polo, golf.
Friends: Carmody of Alco Steel, Zanes of Moore Oil.
Remarks, Incidents, Etc.: Home interests strongest—appeal through affection. Met him at Atlantic City convention of C. P. S. Co.

FIG. 7. Prospect card used by insurance agent selling to wealthy and influential men.

My whole procedure is systematized. I keep card files (see Fig. 7) of my acquaintances or of men whom I want to write—or rather that I intend to write some day. The cards contain the financial rating, if the man is in business for himself, or his salary if he is employed. I have the details of his income, his family and connections, and his tangible property. The card is a complete commercial report, and it also holds whatever intimate personal information I can gain—the habits of himself and his family, their manner of living and—this may seem absurd but it really is of the highest importance—whether or not he loves his wife and children. In the case of a corporation I will note the state of the finances and the relative value and importance of the various officers. I also note any other facts and incidents which come to my notice, and I see to it that the information is always up to date. Finally, I record all the associations of the man or men—their clubs and their intimates. Nearly every case has another case hanging to it, and

in some instances there may be half a dozen policies involved in one. I have known men in such influential positions that their taking a policy will draw a dozen more almost as of course. I call these pivot cases, and they are to be handled with uncommon skill and most thoroughly sold.[1]

Of course such careful methods are not possible or necessary in many lines. In general the time to be spent in prospecting increases with the amount of money involved in the transaction, and the difficulty of effecting the sale.

In Chapter XVI we shall present a more detailed consideration of specific sources and methods to be used in prospecting.

Organization of the Salesman's Time.

In preparation for selling, an important point is a plan for the day's work that will economize the salesman's time. Investigations show that this is a vital need in almost every line. The Dennison Company gives data that are typical. They made a time study of the salesman's job and found that of an 8-hour day but 15 per cent was actually spent in selling. Forty per cent was used in traveling; 20 per cent was used in waiting for interviews; and the remaining 25 per cent was consumed in miscellaneous and detail work.[2]

This company set out to increase the productive time—the actual selling time—of their salesmen. As a result of careful planning and routing, they were able almost to double the percentage of time spent in actual selling. It is probable that by the use of similar analysis any organization can accomplish similar results.

The individual salesman can do much for himself in the way of conservation of time. He should keep a record to show how his hours are being spent and by means of this

[1] *System*, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 180.

[2] CARROLL, G. V. S., Field Sales Organization of the Dennison Manufacturing Company, American Management Association, New York, *Sales Executives' Series* 15, p. 8, 1925. For results of similar studies see Herman C. Nolen and Harold M. Maynard, "Sales Management," p. 382, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1940; John Cameron Aspley, "The Sales Manager's Handbook," 3d ed., p. 490, Dartnell Corp., Chicago, 1940.

record discover sources of inefficiency. By careful planning, routing of calls so as to save time, and elimination of useless calls and unnecessarily long conversations he can divert many more hours per week into productive lines.

Sources of Information.

Much of the information that the salesman needs is supplied by the sales organization. Sales manuals, bulletins, house publications, lectures, illustrated talks, special schools, special trips are employed by progressive sales managers. Frequently the salesman is routed through the various departments of the business, working in each for a few weeks in order to familiarize himself with all steps in the organization routine as they relate to the work of selling. Such careful training seems to be increasingly popular.

The benefit derived from such company instruction depends largely upon the initiative displayed by the salesman. The ambitious salesman will make a strong effort to absorb and retain all the information thus made available.

In addition to this information, the salesman will usually find it profitable to make use of other sources that he may unearth for himself. Among these supplementary sources are the following:

1. Books on selling, advertising, marketing, psychology, economics, public speaking, and kindred subjects.
2. Government bulletins and reports.
3. Trade papers dealing with the line.
4. Reference works in the public library.
5. Advertisements of the product and of competing products.
6. Other salesmen.
7. Manufacturers of the product or of materials used in the product.
8. Personal observation, analysis, and experimentation.

The man who really wants to know will find some way of securing the knowledge that he needs, if not from these sources, then from others that he will discover for himself. It is not argued that the salesman should become a book-

worm—the good salesman is usually far from that—but it is suggested that the initiative that leads the beginner to get the best possible equipment for his work is a valuable asset in the business of selling.

Questions and Exercises

1. Discuss this statement: The salesman cannot know too much about his product.
2. What points should be covered in securing adequate preparation for selling?
3. What arguments are usually advanced in favor of the standardized sales talk?
4. Make a "job analysis" of the work of a salesman in an organization with which you are familiar.
5. Why is an analysis of the salesman's task important in preparation for selling?

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE—ESTABLISHING ACCEPTANCE

Two simple facts about the buyer-seller relationship are readily apparent but are frequently ignored or forgotten by many salesmen, with consequences that are generally unfortunate. The first is that under modern conditions the buyer can usually secure a desired product or a reasonably acceptable substitute from several sources and is thus relatively independent. The second is that competition tends to force prices down so low that the first sale to a buyer is often made at a loss that the seller hopes to offset by later transactions, on the theory that less selling expense will be required once trade is established. The result is that the traditional struggle for immediate sales is pretty generally modified and conditioned by patronage competition.

There are, however, certain exceptions to this generalization. Venders of articles of infrequent purchase and of little primary appeal, for example, are likely to disregard future sales and, in their attempt to escape price competition, may have recourse to unrestrained, aggressive salesmanship. This is likely to arouse resentment and resistance, which can be overcome only through the use of still more aggressive methods. The results are sometimes profitable to the individual seller, but the ill will generated in attaining them tends to spread, so that all sellers are in some measure affected.

Conflicting Interests of Buyer and Seller.

As a result of this bad type of selling, a traditional antagonism has grown up between the salesman and the customer. In one investigation, 100 typical customers

were asked if they thought it would be for the general good for all salesmen to be so trained as to become twice as efficient as at present. Out of the 100, 82 thought that such increase in selling efficiency would be bad, and many expressed the idea that selling is already overdone. In another investigation 2,000 businessmen were asked if they liked salesmen, and 730 said that they did not. Hepner[1] reports that 58.2 per cent of businessmen interviewed indicated that turning down salesmen constituted a problem. In recent years books and articles attacking selling methods have been popular, and organizations of consumers have multiplied. In some public schools, instruction in the intelligent management of purchasing is given, and the salesman is sometimes pictured as an enemy of the consumer.

These isolated bits of evidence will serve to suggest the widespread conviction that the interests of the seller and the buyer are antagonistic. This tradition has been fostered by generations of poor selling. It makes selling harder than it should be.

Selling That Arouses Resistance.

The field of life insurance selling offers a good example of this process of resistance building. Most people probably have a favorable attitude toward insurance as an institution, but the satisfactions afforded by ownership of a policy are less immediately appealing than those to be secured from other more tangible commodities, and without the stimulus of aggressive selling it is probable that relatively little life insurance would be purchased. Agents have therefore undertaken to apply that stimulus, sometimes with unfortunate results. Some agents, through inexperience or the lack of social perception, have gone to extremes in the use of persuasion. They are sometimes said to "back the hearse up to the door." One well-known company even suggested that its agents use the following

[1] HEPNER, HARRY WALKER, "Psychology Applied to Life and Work," p. 12, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1941.

in dealing with prospects who failed to respond to ordinary appeals:

> Mr. Prospect, here is the application blank I had planned for you to sign today. Put it in your desk, and when you get ready to sign it, let me know. But I don't think I would keep it in my desk if I were you. If something should happen to you, your wife will come down and look over your desk. Who is coming with her? Your children? Your father-in-law? Your brother-in-law? Do you want them to find this unsigned application in your desk? Don't give it back to me, because I can't afford to walk the strects with your wife's bread and butter and your children's education in my pocket. Either tear it up, or sign it. It's your blank now, not mine.[1]

Some prospects may respond favorably to talk of this kind. Many men, however, will resent the feigned interest of the salesman in the welfare of the family and the criticism that is implied. The widespread use of such tactics has resulted in considerable ill will. Thus to the natural barrier of the prospect's inertia has been added the barrier of distrust. This calls for still more aggressive effort on the part of agents and results in still greater antagonism among prospects.

Selling that breeds such resistance is bad selling. Any salesman who makes use of methods that produce such unfortunate results is the enemy of all other salesmen, for he is making all selling more difficult. Any sales organization that trains its men to sell in such a way as to leave the customer resistant is the enemy of good business.

More precise information as to the specific acts that alienate customers is to be found in a study made by Frey.[2] In the survey 869 consumer-buyers were interviewed and were asked to state what practices and methods of retail salespeople they found most irritating. Most frequently

[1] Study of Legal Reserve Life Insurance Companies, Temporary National Economic Committee, Government Printing Office, *Monograph* 28, p. 209, 1940.

[2] FREY, HAROLD A., "What Your Customers Expect of Your Sales Force," Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration, University of Toledo, 1934.

disliked were "high-pressure" tactics, mentioned 473 times out of 1,506 responses. Second in importance was "indifference" on the part of salespeople, which was mentioned 159 times. Discourtesy, third in order of importance, was mentioned 95 times. Analysis of these and of 22 other items in the list of undesirable practices suggests that consumer-buyers commonly feel that their interests are dominant in the purchase and that they are likely to be incensed if the salesperson gives any indication of failure to recognize that assumption.

Evident Effort to Sell Creates Resistance.

Glancing back over these examples of good and bad methods, we see one important difference. Good selling does not look like "selling." It does not make the customer prick up his ears and say: "Ah, here is a man trying to make me buy something. I won't!"

We are all interested in buying. But we are not interested in being "sold." The very idea stirs up our spirit of independence, our resistance of dominance by others. The salesman, interested in what he calls the "game" of selling, forgets that.

A well-known executive recently gave his experience in this connection. He found himself in need of a certain financial advisory service, costing several hundred dollars. He investigated various services and decided that one was slightly superior. There were a few points that he wanted to inquire about before ordering, so he asked the service organization to send one of its salesmen to see him. He received this salesman cordially. He made it clear that he had decided to buy the service, that he just wanted to get more information on some specific points before sending in a formal order. There was no need for the salesman to do more than give the desired information. The executive had really sold himself.

But the salesman was accustomed to work hard for every sale. He thought that he was not selling if he did not

make all his sales gestures. He insisted on delivering his regular high-pressure arguments. He ended with a strong appeal for the order, whipped a fountain pen from his pocket, placed a contract in front of the prospect, and tried to get the man to sign.

In an instant the prospect's mental attitude had changed. A moment before he had felt that he was buying. He now felt that he was being sold. The sight of the familiar fountain pen and dotted line brought up all his habitual resistance. He no longer wanted to buy, although he wanted the service. He felt resentful, and he transferred this resentment to the salesman. He decided, illogically enough, not to buy from that company. The salesman lost a good order because he overlooked an important fact in human nature—because he thought he had to *make* the customer buy.

Resistance Disarmed by Better Selling Methods.

The other side of this situation is related by another executive, a man trained by long years of experience to resist the most aggressive sales tactics. He especially delighted in baiting life insurance agents and through much repetition knew most of their arguments better than they did themselves. He really believed in insurance but had formed the habit of refusing to buy.

One day a young chap just out of college came in to see him. The young fellow was likeable enough, clean-cut and intelligent, but he did not look much like a salesman. He did not even pretend to be a salesman. He assumed that the older man knew all about insurance and rather diffidently suggested that now might be a good time to buy some more. The older man was pleased by the boy's deference and immediately said that he *did* want some. He had a cast-iron defense against regular salesmen, but not against this unassuming youth.

These cases illustrate an important fact in human psychology, namely, our tendency to resist any dominance or

dictation by others. From childhood we exercise this trait. Even a baby will resist if you try to hold its hands or restrict its movement. As we grow older, we learn to resist not only physical aggression but any attempt at mental dominance. We want to feel that we are following our own desires, exercising our own choices. As a matter of fact we seldom do make any really free decision; for modern society presses us pretty much in the same mold, and we all by a singular process of free will decide to wear the same kind of clothing, use the same kind of equipment, enjoy the same kind of pleasures, read the same books. But we have the illusion of freedom. We feel that we are really making choices in line with our own tastes and likes and dislikes. We resent it when anyone lets us see the machinery or the methods by which he is trying to influence us.

Make the Customer Feel That He Is Buying—Not Being Sold.

Here, then, is one basic element in good selling: *Make the customer feel that he is buying—not that he is being sold.*

Many successful modern organizations are brilliant illustrations of the application of this idea. Perhaps the five-and-ten cent stores afford the best example. People like to shop in these stores, not only because the merchandise is clean and fresh and cheap but also because they can make their decisions in peace. They can spend all the time that they wish in looking at the goods. If they decide to go out without buying no one seems pained or insulted. The effort to sell the goods—and these stores do make a tremendous effort—is all behind the scenes. The customer feels absolutely free. He appreciates this atmosphere, as is shown by the rapid rise in the patronage of these institutions.

Hardware dealers, grocers, and other retail merchants are beginning to imitate these methods, arranging their goods in such a way that the customer is aware of the clerk only when he wants some information about the article. The vending machine is an extension of this same idea that

is growing in popularity. The mail-order catalogue is another example.

The Studebaker Corporation has demonstrated that low-pressure selling can be applied in the marketing of automobiles, through the use of what may be called a "selling catalogue." This book is ostensibly for the salesman. It presents, in attractive form, complete "confidential" information about the car. Each salesman is supplied with several copies of the book, which he uses as a lending library. Prospective buyers can look over these books at their leisure, giving as much consideration as they wish to the various features. They gain an intimate knowledge of the company and its product that most of them could not secure in any other way. The company finds that the attitude thus developed is favorable to the completion of the sale by the salesman.[1]

We are coming more and more to this nonpressure concept of selling. It works with the human grain rather than against it. We are learning that we do not have to worry about human wants. They are never satisfied. People want more and more of our goods, if we will only let them buy in peace.

We must learn to remember that the mental state of the buyer is usually a somewhat uncomfortable one. He has to make a decision, and making decisions is hard work. It becomes still harder if someone is hustling him, making him feel hurried and uncertain. He is the prey of conflicting desires. Perhaps in desperation he makes a decision that he later regrets. Returned goods, irritation, dissatisfaction are the result. He develops a resistance to selling and to salesmen.

Modern businessmen, alert to the psychology of the customer, are beginning to think seriously about this matter of resistance. They are trying—as illustrated in the preceding paragraphs—to find ways of selling that the customer will like. In the future there will without

[1] *Printers' Ink Monthly*, June, 1940, p. 20.

doubt be more and more attention to this phase of selling. Whether we approve or not, selling ideals are changing.

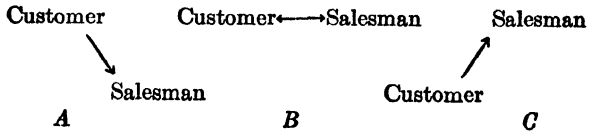
There is an important hint here for the ambitious salesman. If he does not want to be replaced by machines and catalogues and fifteen-dollar-a-week cashier wrappers, he will have to learn to make his selling look less like selling. He will learn to conceal his art. If he has a set speech, he will deliver it so easily that it will sound extemporaneous, natural. He will shun sales tricks. He will try to forget that he is a salesman, remembering that those traits which we usually think are essential to a good salesman are the very ones that make the prospect resistant.

The Clash of Personalities in the Sale.

Every sale involves the interplay of personalities. Whether the salesman meets resistance or acceptance depends largely upon the effect that his personality has upon the customer. This, in turn, is largely dependent upon the satisfactory adjustment of their individual desires for superiority.

From the first moment of the interview occurs this process of classification and adjustment. The customer, reacting to the salesman's dress, manner, voice, and so on, quickly classifies him as a superior, an equal, or an inferior. If the salesman is older or better dressed or stronger, wealthier, more famous, better educated, more expert, more aggressive, then the customer is likely to perceive him as a superior. If, on the other hand, the salesman is young or poorly dressed or small, nervous, weak looking, awkward, ignorant, then the customer is likely to feel himself superior. To salesmen of about the same age, appearance of prosperity, and efficiency, the customer is likely to react as an equal.

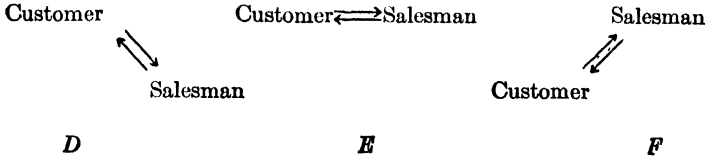
We may express these three relationships that the customer may feel toward the salesman by the three figures *A*, *B*, and *C*. The first shows a case where the customer feels superior; the second, where he feels equal; the third, where he experiences a feeling of inferiority to the salesman.



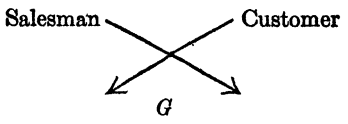
This process of classification—the psychologists call it a perception—is almost instantaneous. It is based upon the prospect's estimate of his own abilities and position as compared with those of the salesmen. Like most estimates it is much influenced by the mental attitude of the estimator. Some prospects habitually overrate themselves. Others, with what is rather loosely called an inferiority complex, may consistently underestimate their positions.

The prospect's classification of the salesman is usually reflected in his manner. If he has rated the salesman as an inferior, he may be condescending or even domineering and dictatorial. Or if he thinks of the salesman as superior, this may show in his deference.

Now, of course, the salesman is going through a similar process of classification and adjustment. He registers his perception of the relationship between him and the prospect. If his estimate agrees with that of the customer, we have the situation presented in Figs. *D*, *E*, and *F*. We see here mutual agreement—and mutual satisfaction. Salesman and customer feel that their status is satisfactorily established.



It sometimes happens, however, that the salesman and the prospect do not agree in their views of each other. The most common case of disagreement is that in which the salesman sizes up the customer as inferior and the customer comes to a similar judgment of the salesman. Their mental attitudes may be shown by the Fig. *G*.



This illustration represents the most common cause of irritation and anger in business. When two men disagree as to "who is boss," not much else can be done until that question is settled. It involves the desire for mastery, one of the strongest of human motives. In selling, such a clash of personalities is almost certain to result in a lost sale.

It is the salesman's business to discover the customer's attitude and to adjust to it. For some salesmen this is easy. They are naturally observant and adaptable. They can be all things to all men. This flexibility is an important trait in the salesman's personality, one that should be cultivated until it becomes habitual.

There is an old idea that the salesman should dominate the prospect. Good salesmen have been ruined by trying to follow this false ideal. No salesman can hope to dominate everyone he meets. To try to do so is sure to antagonize. A few weak and inexperienced customers may be sold through such methods, but these few victories do not compensate for the lost sales.

The ideal relationship is one of mutual deference between the salesman and the customer. The salesman should be careful to indicate that he recognizes the customer's superior ability and position and information—in certain lines. At the same time he should make it clear in a quiet, dignified manner that he regards himself as an expert in his line. Most customers expect this. They do not want to do business with a fawning, cringing, toadying salesman. They want to talk to a man who knows what he is about—who respects himself and by his sales presentation shows he is worthy of respect. At the same time the customer wants to be treated with deference and consideration. He wants his opinions respected. He wants to be made to feel that his points of superiority are recognized by the salesman.

The Tactless Salesman.

The quality that we commonly call tact is largely this ability to perceive the customer's attitude and to recognize his superiority when it is expected. The tactless salesman is usually so busy thinking about himself that he just does not think about the prospect's attitudes. Or he is so cocksure that he cannot even imagine the customer's ideas being worthy of consideration.

The literature on selling is full of illustrations. Here are a number of cases that show the point—blindness to the effect on the customer of a remark or an act:

A customer in a photographic supplies' store asked for some Q-M developer.

"Oh, you mean M-Q developer," said the clerk in a superior fashion.

. . .

A young clerk in a haberdasher's store tried to sell a college professor some purple pajamas. "I wear this kind myself," he assured the professor.

. . .

Another clerk assured a bank president that a certain tie would be "just right for a guy like you."

. . .

A salesman selling to drugstores was lazy or careless and allowed a screen door to slam shut in the face of a man who was entering the store after him. He presently discovered that this man was the owner of the store.

. . .

A salesman persisted in addressing a dignified doctor as "Doc." He later complained because he did not receive a very cordial reception.

. . .

A radio salesman, demonstrating a set to a woman, was called to the telephone. He left his customer without excusing himself. When he came back, he was smoking a cigar, which he kept in his mouth as he talked.

. . .

Another radio salesman in reply to a statement by a prospect said: "I will have to correct your ignorance on that point."

. . .

A building material salesman irritated an architect by a condescending lecture on some very simple points in construction work.

Sometimes the salesman makes mistakes of this kind because of inexperience or ignorance. Ordinarily the prospect will understand when this is the case and will make allowance, merely classifying the salesman as somewhat crude.

In many cases; however, the salesman arouses resistance because of an overdeveloped sense of his own importance. Just as there are people who are color blind or tone deaf, so there are salesmen who cannot judge social relationships. They feel superior and show it. They give the impression of being intolerant, domineering, impudent. They "rub people the wrong way." Sometimes they complain, pathetically, that they do not know what is wrong. They are simply lacking in social perception.

Resistance Aroused by Mannerisms.

Mannerisms—striking habits of behavior or expression—frequently build resistance for the salesman. Like tactlessness, these mannerisms are usually due to the salesman's lack of social perception. A mannerism has been called a habit that makes everybody else tired. "The trouble is," says W. R. Heath, "that most persons afflicted with such mannerisms are usually blind to them; or they may even think of them as an asset."[1]

Here are a few examples:

The Statistical Fanatic.—Has to convert everything into figures.

The Wet Blanket.—He always expects the worst. If he hears that his prospect's little girl has a cold he has to tell a long story about another little girl of the same age who had just such a cold—and died.

The Salesman Who Contradicts.—Has a passion for setting people right.

[1] HEATH, W. R., Little Faults Which Kill Big Orders for Salesmen, *Printers' Ink*, Apr. 2, 1925, p. 163.

The Reminiscent Salesman.—If he takes a trip abroad he bores everybody with the details, brought up at the most irrelevant times.

The Enthusiast.—If he plays golf he has to talk golf to everyone.

The Boastful Salesman.—He thinks the way to advance his house or himself is by bragging.

The Nervous Salesman.—He fidgets, taps his foot, sits on the edge of his chair, chews his lips, bites his fingernails; in general indulges in aimless and superfluous gestures.

The Giggling Salesman.—He laughs at the wrong moment, in what other people consider a silly fashion.

The Overimpressive Salesman.—He cultivates a ponderous manner; clears his throat, frowns, tries to look wise, delivers platitudes in a solemn voice.

The Dramatic Salesman.—He strikes an attitude, orates, gesticulates. "Ah, madam, the hat, it is supreme, marvelous, magnificent!"

Summary: Sales Resistance *versus* Sales Acceptance.

From the discussion thus far in this chapter one point stands out. *Good selling establishes a cordial, friendly relationship of acceptance with the customer.* The salesman who violates this ideal simply loads himself with an unnecessary handicap of resistance.

We have already noted some methods that lead to resistance and some that encourage acceptance. In the following lists such methods are collected for convenience in study.

SALES METHODS THAT CREATE RESISTANCE

1. Methods that make the customer feel that he has been tricked, trapped, deceived.
2. Methods that injure the customer's pride—make him feel humiliated.
3. Methods that make the prospect feel that he is being sold.
4. Mannerisms that disgust or amuse.
5. Interference with the prospect's work or interests.

6. Evident opposition or indifference to the prospect's beliefs.
7. Sales behavior that suggests that resistance is expected by the salesman.
8. Making the prospect wait or making him hurry.
9. Ignoring the prospect's wants.

SALES METHODS THAT BUILD ACCEPTANCE

1. Making the customer feel at ease, unhurried.
2. Making the customer feel that he is buying what he wants in the way he wants to buy it.
3. Making the customer feel superior by deferring to his ideas.
4. Being interested in the customer's desires and beliefs.
5. Making it easy for the customer to buy.
6. Helping the customer solve his problems.
7. Encouraging favorable attitude by extra or unexpected service.
8. Adapting the speed of selling to the customer's mental pace.
9. Suggesting by manner and approach that acceptance is expected.

Conclusion. A Fundamental Principle of Selling.

If these two lists of good and bad methods of selling are studied, a basic principle is revealed. It is simply that *good selling builds acceptance by selling from the customer's point of view.*

Lincoln expressed this principle when he said: "If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend." Lord Chesterfield had the same point in mind when he urged his son "to observe the little habits, the likings, the antipathies, and the tastes of those whom you would gain; and then take care to provide them with the one and to secure them from the other." Francis Bacon saw a different angle of the same idea when he advised that "If you would work any man, you must either know his nature and fashions, and so lead him; or his ends, and so persuade him; or his weaknesses and disadvantages, and so awe him; or those who have interest in him, and so govern him." Disraeli followed this principle when he said: "When I talk with the Queen, I observe a simple rule of conduct. I never deny; I never contradict; I sometimes forget."

For the customer, like Disraeli's queen, holds the whip hand. The customer has the final word. It is his wants that are to be satisfied and his pocketbook that is to be touched. He is the leading actor in the sales drama. By the logic of the situation his point of view will prevail.

Questions and Exercises

1. In what ways do the interests of the buyer and seller sometimes conflict?

2. Give from your own experience an illustration of sales tactics that caused resistance.

3. Is it possible to sell goods without arousing some resistance?

4. Think of several people you regard as inferior. Make a list of the factors that influence your classification. Make a similar list of things that make you classify a person as superior.

5. What is tact?

6. Discuss this statement: The basis of salesmanship is mental dominance of the customer by the salesman.

7. Discuss this statement: Every sale must have a manager. The salesman should be the manager.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER VIII

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE—AROUSE THE BUYING ATTITUDE

The president of a large chain organization recently revealed the methods that he uses in selecting the locations for his stores. His conclusions suggest an important aspect of selling. He said:

> The big thing is to be where people pass who are in *the buying mood.* It does not matter how many people are going along the sidewalk if they are thinking of something other than buying. If they are intent on getting to their work or on getting to lunch or on getting home—if they have some other purpose in mind—then their number means little to us. That is why we like to be near other stores. You might think that we would want to get away from competitors. Nothing of the sort. They bring business. We want to be where there are lots of people and most of them are in the buying mood.

This successful merchant expresses a truth that many salesmen never discover—that the sale is possible only when the customer drops all other interests and activities and passes into that mental state which we call the buying attitude. Some sales organizations wait until this mood is established and then take advantage of it. Others have to build up the attitude. For both types of selling an understanding of the psychology involved is of great importance. We must class this as one of the basic principles of all selling.

Nonbuying Attitudes.

People spend relatively little time in buying goods. For many hours a day the customer is not a customer. His mind is on his business or his family or his friends or his play.

At such a moment—when the customer's mind is a thousand miles away from buying—the inexpert salesman breaks in upon him with an approach somewhat like this:

Good day, Mr. Smith. I am representing the International Bulk Staple Clincher Company. Could I interest you in our line, Mr. Smith?

What is the customer pretty sure to say to that? Nine time out of ten the truthful reply will be that he is not interested. The salesman is sorry to hear this and departs. Or if he is more aggressive, he may persist in his attempt to show his product. Then the customer's lack of interest may change to positive resistance. Finally the salesman gives up and returns to his manager to report that there does not seem to be any demand for the product.

To expect such an approach to sell goods is much like trying to start an automobile with the spark turned off. Until the prospect is in the buying mood, the salesman's efforts are wasteful and may even be harmful.

How to arouse this mood! Here is a problem, perhaps the biggest problem in all selling. To get an answer we must make a careful analysis of the buying attitude and then study the psychology of the customer in order to learn how the attitude is initiated.

Types of Buying Attitude.

It is perhaps more accurate to speak of buying attitudes rather than just one attitude. There are many sales situations, and each one involves a characteristic reaction on the part of the customer. The most important of these situations and accompanying attitudes are given in the following list.

Attitude of Eagerness.—The customer is excited, thrilled by the thought of possessing the article that he is thinking of buying. His mouth is watering, so to speak. An example would be the case of an art enthusiast buying a wonderful painting or a vain woman buying a hat that she

thinks will make her look twice as attractive. The article is wanted for its own sake.

Attitude of Earnestness.—The customer is buying something that he hopes will be useful in accomplishing a purpose that he regards as important. The object is not desired for its own sake, but for its utility in making possible some other satisfaction. A man with a headache buying some aspirin would be an example or a housewife buying a skillet in which to cook a chop.

Attitude of Deliberation.—The customer is chiefly concerned with a judicial weighing of values. These values are usually secondary rather than primary ones. That is, the goods themselves are merely the means to a satisfaction. A house builder deciding whether to buy a furnace or an oil heater would be a good example.

Attitude of Mental Conflict.—The customer has one strong motive or set of motives favoring the purchase and another set, equally strong, opposed to the purchase. In this situation some people fall into a state of inner conflict. They feel uncertain, uncomfortable. A man who wants to buy an automobile to satisfy his pride but who realizes that he ought to use his money to repair his house would be an example. Another case would be a woman, embarrassed by the pleadings of a book agent, not wanting to buy the book, but not strong enough to refuse to buy.

Attitude of Casual "Looking Around."—The customer is interested in buying, perhaps far in the future, and thus has an interest in looking at goods in order to have an idea of values. Thus a woman shopper in a department store might stop a moment to look at dresses without much idea of buying.

Attitude of Preoccupation.—The customer's mind is on something else, while he buys by habit, relying on past experience rather than present judgment. A man buying his favorite evening paper would be an example. Buying a package of gum from a vending machine might be another.

It is to be understood that these are merely typical attitudes. They are the ones most frequently experienced. Sometimes the customer experiences a mixture of two or more attitudes at the same time. The sale does not take place unless they are present in some form and to some degree.

The Psychology of the Buying Attitude.

The mental reactions involved in these buying attitudes are very much like those present in other common attitudes of daily life. What do we mean, for example, when we say that a man assumed a listening attitude? Or that his attitude was aggressive? Or when we say that we cannot do anything for a person because of his irritating attitude?

The psychologist in explaining attitudes says that they represent a mental condition in which the individual is under the control of one particular set of integrated emotions, instincts, and habits. When a man assumes the fighting attitude, for example, he is probably experiencing the emotion of anger; he shows some of the instinctive adjustments that go with fighting, such as clenched fists and flashing eyes; and he may also place himself in the habitual position to which he has been trained by his lessons in boxing. The important thing is that for the moment this one group of adjustments takes command. Other activities are put aside. The attitude dominates his behavior until interrupted or until it has run its course.

What causes a man to assume any particular attitude? This question leads to the very heart of the problem of human motives. In general we find that three theories have been advanced. These are

1. The savage theory—animism.
2. The theory of forces.
3. The theory of reaction patterns.

The first, or the *animistic theory*, assumes that man is a puppet. The savage peopled the world about him with all kinds of spirits. He thought that these interfered with

human affairs. If a man assumed a bad attitude, it was because he was under the influence of an evil spirit.

The belief in external *forces* that direct human attitudes is a step in advance of the animistic theory. As an example of this idea, suppose that we see a man with his fists clenched, his jaw set, his eyes flashing, his face red. If we ask what makes him that way, someone will probably answer *anger*. In a similar way we are told that *fear* makes a man tremble, *sorrow* bows him, *love* blinds him, and so on, through a long list of activities that are thought of as operating on the individual in much the same way that gravity operates on a piece of iron.

The trouble with both the puppet theory and the force theory is that they ignore the fact that man's acts are very largely guided by his own internal machinery. It is quite clear, for example, that fear is not a force but a process—a process not greatly different in its general nature from a large number of familiar processes such as digestion and breathing. No one thinks of calling digestion a force. The same reasoning should apply to mental activity. If we are to understand man's attitudes, we must look to his psychological processes, not to forces or spirits.

Attitudes Depend upon Reaction Patterns.

Modern science explains human acts in terms of what we may call *reaction patterns*. We are all walking bundles of such patterns. A good illustration would be the act of jumping at a loud sound. Suppose that an automobile backfires in the midst of a crowd of people. Almost all of them will respond in the same way—by jumping, turning to look, dodging. All make the same responses because they all have much the same kind of machinery, consisting of the sense organs, connecting nerves, and muscles. All have stored away in their nervous systems about the same pattern of responses to a loud and unexpected noise.

No one knows how many such reaction patterns the average adult is carrying around with him. Certainly the number

must run into the millions. Every act, even a simple one such as striking a match, probably involves several dozen.

Scientists have tried to classify these patterns into groups, but it is a difficult task. Here are some classifications that are frequently used:

Relatively *simple* patterns, as for example, sneezing, coughing, blinking.

Relatively *complex* patterns, such as those involved in working a problem in mathematics.

Relatively *native* (or inherited) patterns, such as those found in a young baby.

Relatively *acquired* patterns, such as those involved in reading or speaking.

Relatively *fixed* patterns, such as the contraction of the pupil of the eye when looking at a very bright light.

Relatively *modifiable* patterns, such as those involved in the pronunciation of a word.

Relatively *involuntary* patterns, such as those involved in jumping at a loud sound.

Relatively *voluntary* patterns, such as those involved in writing one's name.

Relatively *unconscious* patterns, such as those involved in breathing or the circulation of the blood.

Relatively *conscious* patterns, such as those involved in discussing a sales proposition.

Impulsive Behavior. Impulsive and Persistent Patterns Called "Wants."

From the point of view of the salesman, one of the most interesting facts about these various reaction patterns is that they are *impulsive*. By this we mean that once they are set going, they are like a train of gunpowder to which a match has been applied. They tend to carry through to their accustomed conclusion. Weaker antagonistic patterns are pushed aside. For the moment the individual's behavior is controlled by the active process then in command.

A good picture of impulsive behavior patterns in operation can be had by watching the actions of a hungry animal,

say a dog or cat, when shown a bit of food that is just beyond reach. In such a situation the animal's food-getting patterns are dominant. All other interests are put aside. The whole repertoire of food-getting behavior is run through—jumping, barking, "begging"—until the food is secured or the animal exhausted.

All reaction patterns show something of this impulsive nature, but it is most significant in certain ones that we are accustomed to call *wants, urges, desires.* These terms are popular rather than scientific, but they are convenient in naming this most important group of reactions. Because wants are so characteristically impulsive and dynamic, so persistent once they have been touched off, so frequently blocked and delayed in expression, they practically dominate human behavior. Out of our millions of reaction patterns a very few—perhaps fifteen or twenty—are uppermost virtually all the time. To express this in everyday language, we spend most of our time trying to satisfy our wants for food and shelter and rest and love and superiority and safety and comfort and the like. These are the mainsprings of our acts.

Herein is a vital bit of psychology for the salesman. People buy goods because wants (impulsive patterns) have been set going and can be satisfied only by the purchase of certain goods. Goods have value only because they are wanted. If you ask a salesman—say a man selling shoes—what he is selling, he will tell you the name of his product. But the shoe salesman is not selling shoes—as such. A shoe, just as a bit of leather carved in a certain form, is of no value. Tons of them have been dumped in the ocean because they were out of style and nobody would buy them. It is because a shoe can satisfy wants—the want for comfort and protection and pride—that it has value. The salesman, then, is selling satisfaction of wants. He should never forget this. It is fundamental. As G. Lynn Sumner has expressed it, "The most important development in modern selling is the idea of selling, not the article itself,

but the use of it, the benefits to be derived from it, the enjoyment of it."

Buying Attitudes Based on Wants.

Going back to our discussion of buying attitudes, it is now evident that these attitudes are based upon aroused wants. The customer does not assume the attitude until a want is active. The sale actually begins when the customer begins to experience a want.

The first task of all advertising and all selling is to make customers experience wants—not to create wants, for we have seen that wants depend upon reaction patterns already present in the customer. All that selling can do is to arouse wants so that other activities and interests of the customer are pushed aside for the moment. Then, the want being active, the second task of selling is to show that it can be satisfied by the product offered.

Too many salesman try to go directly to the second task of selling—demonstrating the good qualities of the product —without making sure that the first task is completed. They try to sell before they have prepared the way for selling. They are like a farmer who tries to plant his seed before he has plowed the ground.

Find What the Customer Wants Most.

Before you can appeal to the customer's wants, you must find out what they are. Naturally if you think selling is a matter of reciting facts about something that you have to sell, you are not going to learn much of the prospect's point of view. Selling in terms of wants, on the other hand, means that you investigate first—then tell your story.

A concrete picture of how this works is given by James A. Worsham. In telling how his salesmen are trained to sell heaters he says:

Our salesmen do not go out to "sell." They simply go out to find out what a prospect *wants* most in life at that particular time—a sort of

investigating expedition—a voyage of discovery—a lone effort of exploration—really one of the most fascinating tasks in the world.

Their greatest discovery has been that everyone is really eager to discuss his wants, even with a perfect stranger.

There is no embarrassment in the mind of the salesman—no fear—no self-consciousness. He is at perfect ease. He knows that his prospect actually enjoys talking about his wants and ways and means for satisfying them.

As the conversation proceeds, the dominating wants of the prospect come to the surface and the right kind of salesman proceeds to weave his proposition into the pattern, showing how and why his proposition will best satisfy those wants. Then the prospect buys.

Let me find out the dominating want of any individual, and I will tell you what he can be sold. Isn't that simple enough? That is exactly what we are teaching our dealers salesmen—our own salesmen—to go out and discover, uncover, or disclose the dominating and also minor wants of the prospect and then, if possible, fit oil burners into the picture as being able to satisfy those wants. The so-called "sale" will take care of itself.

With this thought in mind, a salesman, for example, finds out that a prospect is an amateur photographer and wants a darkroom. He has no room for one until the salesman points out that by using an oil burner the coal room can be converted into a darkroom under ideal conditions—cool and free from dust.

. . . . . .

The secret of its success is that the salesman actually with this view of selling, goes out and works at it and works at it in the right way, without the fear of people in his heart. He knows he is a welcome visitor to everyone on this basis.[1]

Ways of Diagnosing Wants.

Granted that the logical way to begin the sale is by trying to discover and arouse the customer's wants, the problem of how to accomplish this remains. It would be a fine thing for the salesman if he had some sure and simple method—a kind of mental voltmeter, so to speak—that would enable him to locate the best point of approach. Unfortunately there is no such delightfully easy system. The best we can

[1] WORSHAM, JAMES A., Low Pressure Selling, *Printers' Ink Monthly*. Published in book form by the Midwest Press, Bloomington, Ill., 1930. Quotation by permission.

hope to do is to use and to improve upon already existing methods.

How do successful salesmen discover the strong buying motives? One of the simplest devices and one of the most effective is to ask a question that will lead the customer to talk about his wants. The practical value of this approach is indicated by the experience of a leading manufacturer of office equipment, reported by White.[1] Analysis of the methods employed by the salesmen showed that most of them began by telling the prospective buyer what the equipment was designed to do. A few men habitually began by asking questions about the prospect's present system. The average sales of this second group were 55 per cent higher than those of others who failed to ask questions. Analysis showed that the difference was not to be explained on the basis of any other factor such as territory or personality or experience. The greater effectiveness of the second group of salesmen apparently was associated with the approach that they used.

Thoughtful observation of the customer and his surroundings is also important in getting an idea of his wants. It is said that the great magician, Robert Houdin, through repeated practice trained himself to walk by a shop window and at one glance fix in mind an accurate impression of every article displayed. Salesmen will find similar practice useful. According to Crowther,[2] John H. Patterson of the National Cash Register Company stressed the value of such observation. He told his salesmen:

> Take interesting the merchant, which is the first step toward a sale. We instruct on how to go into a store and what to look for; to make a purchase and see how it is handled, to watch what is done with credit, c.o.d., and delivery sales, to talk with clerks, and to watch out vigilantly for some actual mistakes that involve or might involve a loss; to pick up from the owner or the clerks the policies and characteristics of the

[1] White, Corning, The Mathematics of Salesmanship, *Printers' Ink Monthly*, August, 1940, p. 34.

[2] Crowther, Samuel, Patterson Sets Out to "Make" Salesmen, *System*, July, 1923, p. 39.

business, and also to sketch the layout of the store. In short, the preliminary work is so important that we devote a great deal of time to making our people sharp observers of what may help them in their store systems. It is one of our fixed principles that no talk about selling should be started until the agent knows all about the business of the man he expects to sell . . .

Discovering Wants by Special Studies.

Another study reported by White[1] supports this conclusion. The methods used by the salesmen representing a food jobber were carefully analyzed, and it was found that those who started their calls on the dealers by making a physical count of stock on the shelves averaged orders that were two and one-half times as large as the average of those who omitted this first step. We would not be justified in concluding, of course, that the use of this method was the only reason for increased sales, but there does seem to be a relationship between intelligent observation and the efficient handling of the interview.

Successful selling organizations today are finding it profitable to make special investigations of the customer's wants, supplementing the efforts of the individual salesman. A typical case is reported by a distributor for General Electric refrigerators:

Here is what happened in our store: A woman would come in and express an interest in a General Electric refrigerator. She probably had read about it in some of the manufacturer's national advertising or in our own local newspaper advertising—perhaps both. The clerk would seat her in a chair in front of the machine and proceed to tell her, in very full detail, all about it. He would explain how it made ice; talk at length about how the solution was formed and the part it had in the refrigeration process; point out the pump and motor; demonstrate how and why the bearings made smooth and noiseless operation possible. In fact he would tell her substantially everything that such a machine is and does.

The woman would try to look interested and make brave pretense at understanding what was said to her. In most cases she would not buy—not then. Finally I reached the conclusion that the men were talking too much and decided to try out a little experiment with the idea of

[1] WHITE, *loc. cit.*

determining just what it was that caused women to buy these machines. Did they buy because of the very complete explanation and demonstration of the mechanical details or in spite of it?

To get this information he sent his men out, during various off times in the store, to make a canvass of purchasers and to ask them certain questions including these:

Is the machine working well?
Does it do everything that you expected?
What do you like best about it?
What was the thing that most impressed you and caused you to buy?

A record of all the answers was kept; and after the canvass was completed, they were compared and classified.

The most notable reaction was that not a single woman knew anything at all about how the machine was made or how it worked! Apparently, the technical explanation given in the store made little impression. At any rate it had little effect in causing them to buy.

Well, what *did* cause them to buy? The answers were carefully classified and were assembled in only four main divisions:

Some women said they bought the machine because it was "so clean looking."

Others said they knew it must be good if such a first-class organization manufactured it.

Still others said it impressed them because it was "so handy and convenient."

And the fourth division said they bought the machine because (accidentally perhaps) the salesman had said: "Just let it alone; don't monkey with it; it will take care of itself."

The net result of the survey was that the store prepared an entirely new selling presentation which omitted everything except such features as a woman could understand and wanted to hear. Expressed in tabloid form the Sherrod sales talk in behalf of the refrigerator is substantially this:

Here is the machine; isn't it clean and beautiful? It surely would look well in your kitchen, wouldn't it? And just see how handy it is.

You know, of course, that the General Electric people wouldn't put out a refrigerator that was not thoroughly good; they couldn't afford to. You don't have to be an expert mechanic to run it either. Just let it alone; it will run itself.[1]

Many companies have used similar methods for finding out what customers want and what appeals to use in selling. The Fuller Brush Company has employed a Household Testing Bureau—really a group of housewives who tell the company how they feel about new products. A company making clothing has a retail store as a testing laboratory, with the designers out in front meeting customers, finding out what they like and want. Montgomery Ward and Company send their buyers on regular trips into the field to talk with customers. General Motors has used a staff of experts who try to predict what people will want in motor cars. Hundreds of organizations are trying by one method or another to get a clear picture of the consumer and a measure of his wishes. This careful study of the customer is a characteristic and significant feature of modern selling methods—a feature worthy of the closest study by every progressive salesman.

Discovering Wants by Studying Lists.

A third method of unearthing the customer's wants is by the study of lists in which the leading human motives have been classified. As we noted in a preceding paragraph, although man has millions of reaction patterns, a few of them are strongly impulsive and practically dominate his conduct. It is possible to make a fairly satisfactory enumeration of these. Almost every textbook on psychology gives such a list, sometimes under the heading of instincts, sometimes under wants or urges or desires. Here, for example, is a list given by Strong.[2]

[1] SHERROD, B., Do Salesmen Talk Too Much? *Printers' Ink*, Dec. 27, 1928, p. 10.

[2] STRONG, EDWARD K., JR., "The Psychology of Selling and Advertising," McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1925. (In the revised edition of this book, which appeared as "Psychological Aspects of Business"

Man's Native Wants:

To eat.
To hunt.
To acquire, collect, possess.
To escape from pain and suffering.
To escape when frightened.
To avoid disgusting objects.
To be active.
To have emotional excitement.
To be seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting.
To have mental activity.
To overcome interference.

Man's Native Social Wants:

To be with others.
To watch others.
To be noticed by others.
To show approval or disapproval.
To receive approval and escape disapproval.
To dominate others.
To be submissive to and follow a leader.
To love an individual of the opposite sex.
To love children.

Poffenberger[1] gives a somewhat similar list, except that he calls these strong motives *desires.*

Human Desires:

1. Desire to drink.
2. Desire to eat.
3. The sex desire.
4. Desire for rest and comfort.
5. Desire to escape from danger.
6. Self-assertion and submissiveness.
7. Desire to conform and desire to be different.
8. Parental desire.
9. Desire to play.
10. Sociability and shyness.
11. Desire to explore the new and love of the familiar.

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in 1938, the author makes certain changes in this list of motives. The older edition, however, seems most useful for our present purpose.)

[1] POFFENBERGER, ALBERT T., "Psychology in Advertising," 2d ed., Chap. IV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1932.

A somewhat shorter list prepared by the writer in an attempt to select those wants which are relatively important in modern commercial life includes the following:

TEN IMPORTANT PRIMARY WANTS[1]

The want for appetizing food.
The want for thirst-quenching drinks.
The want for comfortable surroundings.
The want for means of escape from danger and pain.
The want for sex companionship.
The want for means for promoting the welfare of loved ones.
The want for social approval.
The want for superiority over others.
The want for mastery over obstacles.
The want for play.

Other writers on psychology may give somewhat longer or shorter lists and may use slightly different names in describing these groups of impulsive reaction patterns. The salesman, however, need not worry over these details. The important thing is that here are tabulated the most powerful of human motives. Here are the mainsprings of conduct. Appeal successfully to one of these, and you are on the road to a sale.

Secondary Wants.

Most of the wants given in the accompanying lists are relatively native—that is, they represent reaction patterns that are largely hereditary in origin. In the main they are ways of acting that in the history of the race had survival value; individuals who did not react by fighting and loving and running away and so on, at the right time, were likely to be eliminated. Man's behavior is in part the result of this selective process.

Building upon this inherited core, the individual develops for himself certain ways of acting that may come to have much the force and insistence of more basic wants. Thus

[1] NIXON, H. K., "Principles of Advertising," p. 75, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1937.

a man's general want for superiority may become centered in a want to be the best checker player in town. In a similar way men develop the want to save money, to conserve time, to achieve efficiency, and the like. These secondary wants rarely are as strong as the primary ones, but they are not to be ignored. Glancing back at the list of buying attitudes given at the beginning of this chapter, it will be seen that these secondary motives are especially important in the type of selling in which the buyer is in a deliberative attitude, when he is just looking around, and when he is buying from habit. Among the more important secondary wants we would mention the following:

Secondary Wants:

1. The want for economy.
2. The want for efficiency.
3. The want for cleanliness.
4. The want for beauty.
5. The want for money.
6. The want for profit.
7. The want for utility.
8. The want for style.
9. The want for health.

In a general way it is desirable to appeal to primary wants if possible, but in many types of selling such appeals would seem out of place. In the past twenty years there has been a tendency to an increasing use of primary appeals, especially in advertising. A further discussion of this point is given on page 270.

The Problem Approach as Revealing Wants.

In Chapter III we spoke of the problem approach as best adapted to modern selling conditions. It should now be noted that one of the chief values of this approach is that it takes the salesman straight to the vital point in the sale—the customer's wants. A problem is simply a want for which no solution has been found. Talking about a problem brings it into the focus of attention and tends to

rearouse the want that originally inspired the problem. Thus the buying attitude is established in the quickest possible manner.

This problem approach solves the whole question of attention and interest in the sale. To the customer his own problems are of the greatest interest. He wants to talk about them. The salesman who has made an intelligent study of these problems, who is willing to listen attentively to the customer's explanation of them, and who is prepared to offer a convenient and convincing solution for them has a sure way to the customer's esteem.

Methods of Appealing to Wants.

Having discovered the customer's wants, the next step is to present the sales story in such a way as to appeal to him. Herein lies the true art in salesmanship.

To accomplish his purpose the salesman has certain tools, certain methods by which wants may be stimulated and directed. The following are the most important of these methods:

1. Demonstration of product.
2. Explanation.
3. Argument.
4. Proof.
5. Testimonials.
6. Persuasion.
7. Suggestion.

Skill in selling is largely a matter of skill in the use of these methods. A thorough knowledge of their use is so important to the salesman that several of the following chapters are devoted to the discussion of these topics.

Summary and Conclusion.

To summarize the thought presented in this chapter, the first step in the sale is to establish the buying attitude. The buying attitude is not present until the customer experiences a want. The principle may then be stated as

follows: *Good selling establishes and encourages the buying attitude by arousing a want and by showing how the goods will satisfy that want.*

The successful application of this principle depends upon the salesman's ability to discover and appeal to wants. To discover wants, we have the question method, the special investigation, and the study of lists of motives. Most important of all is the habit of thinking: *What is the customer's problem? What does he want most? How can I fit my proposition to his want?*

Questions and Exercises

1. Give three illustrations of each of the buying attitudes listed in the text.

2. What is meant by the term *reaction pattern?* Give examples.

3. Give examples of reaction patterns to illustrate different degrees of *impulsiveness.*

4. Coughing, sneezing, jumping at a loud sound are usually quite impulsive. Why are they not included in the lists of human wants?

5. What is a problem, defined in terms of wants?

6. Select some familiar product, and analyze the wants that usually motivate its purchase.

7. Considering human life as a whole, what three wants are most important in guiding behavior? Give evidence for your statement.

Suggested Readings

DOUBMAN, J. RUSSELL: "Salesmanship and Types of Selling," Chap. VI, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1939.

LAIRD, DONALD A.: "What Makes People Buy," Chap. IV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1935.

NIXON, H. K.: "Principles of Advertising," Chap. IV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1937.

POFFENBERGER, ALBERT T.: "Psychology in Advertising," 2d ed., Chaps. III, IV, V, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1932.

RUSSELL, FREDERIC A., and FRANK HERMAN BEACH: "Textbook of Salesmanship," 3d ed., Chap. VI, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1941.

SNOW, A. J.: "Psychology in Personal Selling," Chaps. I, II, III, XIII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1926.

STRONG, EDWARD K., JR.: "Psychological Aspects of Business," Chaps. V, VI, XIII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1938.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOURTH PRINCIPLE—KEEP THE SELLING ATTITUDE

We have just concluded that the salesman must establish or direct the buying attitude in the customer. We should not overlook the fact that it is equally important for him to keep uppermost in himself what we shall call the *selling attitude.* We shall, indeed, discover that this is another of our fundamental sales principles.

What Is the Selling Attitude?

Everyone knows from personal experience pretty well what is meant by this selling attitude. Authors differ somewhat in the terms used, but they agree on the basic idea that the salesman is a man who can concentrate his whole attention on making the sale, pursuing this goal intently, enthusiastically, persistently. The selling attitude is the way in which he acts and feels while thus actively at work.

An illustration will help establish the point. Suppose five men gathered around a conference table. One man, a banker, is thinking of buying a certain property. His is the buying attitude. At his side is his lawyer who is weighing every aspect of the proposed deal from the legal point of view. His is the judicial attitude. Next to him sits an architect, busy with ideas about the building to be erected on the plot. You might call his the planning attitude. Across the table sits a real estate expert, called in to give disinterested advice. His might be called the advisory attitude. Finally, there is the salesman who has been working on this deal for months. He has been living with it constantly in mind twenty-four hours a day. He is

bending every energy to present his story in the most effective manner possible. He is allowing nothing to interfere with that end. He is eager, intent, enthusiastic, active. He represents the selling attitude.

Hindering Attitudes in the Sale: Fear.

The quickest way to gain an appreciation of the importance of the salesman's attitudes in the sale is to note the effect of so-called "negative mental states." Of these one of the most troublesome is that of *fear.*

Salesmen, especially those who are young and inexperienced, are frequently subject to annoying inhibitions. One of the commonest is the fear of facing the customer. Canvassers have been known to walk around the block several times, trying to summon up enough courage to knock at the customer's door. Even mature salesmen sometimes experience this fear when suddenly called upon to present their proposition to a board of directors or a committee of important executives. The fear, of course, is not of physical consequences but is rather based upon a dread of making a poor impression or of suffering a humiliation of pride. Sometimes it arises from a dread of the unknown. It is probably akin to the stage fright that afflicts many people when they try to speak in public. Such fears are quite irrational, but they may be a serious handicap.

A first step in overcoming selling fear is to know the proposition thoroughly. In many cases that is all that is necessary. When the salesman knows that he is capable, that he is fully equipped to make a good presentation, he is free to stop attending to the possibility of making a poor impression.

A second helpful rule is to concentrate on the service that the salesman can render the customer. It is quite understandable that the salesman who secretly thinks that he is doing something disreputable in selling goods will be a prey to fears. No man can do the best possible selling until he is firmly convinced that what he is selling is good

and useful to the man who buys it. Salesmen need not only to know this but to keep it constantly in mind.

A third method involves the psychology of suggestion. Teachers of salesmanship are accustomed to tell their men to stand erect, breathe deep, assume an attitude of poise and power. One teacher trains his men to "stick out the belt buckle," in order to encourage this attitude. Others suggest the importance of the haircut, the shoe shine, the well-pressed suit, the taxi, the expensive hotel room, the luxurious meal, as devices to induce the feeling of power and optimism.

All this, of course, is self-suggestion. Within limits it is a useful method of overcoming selling fear. It encourages the salesman to forget his weaknesses and deficiencies and to shift his attention to the place where it belongs—the sale.

Self-consciousness Hinders Selling.

A mental state frequently associated with fear is that which we call *self-consciousness*. By this is meant that the salesman falls to thinking about himself and the impression that he is making and is emotionally disturbed by the ideas that crowd into his mind. A good share of our behavior is ordinarily carried on by habit. It is a common experience that when we try to substitute conscious control for the easy and habitual way of doing things—when we become conscious of ourselves acting—we are apt to be less effective than when performing in our normal fashion.

The only way to overcome self-consciousness is to direct the attention outward to something else. The salesman who is concentrating on the sale, who is thinking about the customer and his reactions, cannot at the same time be unduly conscious of self. Such voluntary control of attention is unfortunately difficult. Salesmen find to their sorrow that it is not enough to resolve to think less about themselves. The ability to concentrate on the sale usually comes from a carefully developed interest, an interest that is based upon familiarity and study.

An analogy will make this point clearer. It would not do much good to tell the average man to concentrate on thinking about the rocks that he might see on a day's walk. He would not know much about rocks, and it would be hard for him to keep his mind on the subject. The trained geologist, however, would have no such difficulty. By reason of his experience, the rocks would have meaning for him. It would be easy for him to spend hours thinking about them. In the same way the background of experience that the salesman builds up is the greatest help to him in keeping his mind on the sale. The trained salesman is so interested in what he is doing that he does not have time to be self-conscious.

The "Too Proud-to-sell" Attitude.

Some men are handicapped as salesmen because they feel that to try to sell goods is somehow undignified. Probably the basis of this feeling is a false pride. There are men who are not afraid to do the most menial work but who draw back at the thought of being put in the position of soliciting others to do something for them.

The obvious answer to this attitude is that the salesman who has a real service to render to his customers is not asking people to do something for him. He is in a position to do something for them. Until the sensitive individual can bring himself to believe and really feel this way, his pride may trouble him.

An insurance man who used to be somewhat troubled by the feeling that his work placed him in an inferior position met his difficulty by making a little record of a number of cases in which the families of men to whom he had sold insurance were saved from want by the insurance proceeds. He also recorded other instances in which he had failed to place insurance and the death of the head of the family had resulted in widow and children being left without funds. By looking over this list occasionally, he keeps pretty constantly in mind the fact that he is doing a real service when

he sells insurance. As long as he feels that way, he is not troubled by any false pride.

Indifference, Daydreaming, and Apathy Hinder Selling.

We have already noted that indifference on the part of salespeople is responsible for many lost sales. Employers find this an ever-present menace to good selling.

Closely related to indifference is the apathetic attitude manifest by many poor salesmen. Apathy may be due to lack of energy, poor health, lack of interest, or failure to appreciate the need for alertness. Whatever the cause, it is a most serious handicap. There is not much opportunity in business for the apathetic individual.

Preoccupation and daydreaming are also enemies of selling efficiency. Especially in retail stores is to be found the absent-minded clerk who, given an opportunity, falls into a state of reverie, gazing vacantly into space, busy with thoughts far removed from the immediate environment. Frequently these mental states arise from an inner conflict, a clash of desires, a frustrated wish, a worry or secret fear. Psychologists have found that occasionally sufferers from this type of mental disturbance may be brought back to a more normal attitude by a frank discussion of the danger and futility of such departures from the world of reality and a sympathetic attempt to find and remove the cause of the inner struggle.[1]

Outside interests may also serve to distract the salesman. Hobbies and enthusiasms are a good thing in their place, but some individuals become so immersed in these side lines that they neglect the more important things.[2]

[1] For a discussion of this problem, as met in the R. H. Macy & Company store, see V. V. Anderson, "Psychiatry in Industry," Harper & Brothers, New York, 1929.

[2] Samuel Crowther in his biography of John H. Patterson says that Patterson insisted that his cash-register salesmen should not know how to act as repair men and even prohibited them from carrying screw drivers, fearing that they might become so interested in tinkering with the machines that they would forget to sell them.

The Salesman and Self-limitation.

What is sometimes called the attitude of *self-limitation* is another handicap to many salesmen. Just as we have an idea of how far we can reach or how fast we can run, so we have a fixed idea of how much we can earn or how much we can sell.

Frequently these fixed ideas are illogical and untrustworthy. There is an old story of an insurance salesman who was known as a two-thousand-dollar man. He thought he could not sell any policy larger than that. His manager, to overcome this bad mental habit, arranged for him to call on a wealthy friend who had agreed to *demand* a larger policy. Thus the manager helped the agent realize that there were people in the world who thought in bigger terms than the ones he had accepted.

Sales managers in many lines have had similar experiences with the salesman whose own limited notion of sales possibilities prevents larger sales that might easily be made by a man of bigger vision. Salesmen need to have a bit of the expansive expectancy of Mark Twain's *Colonel Sellers*. They must be able to think in terms of big business. Thousands of capable men and women lead mediocre lives because they have accepted for themselves a low standard of accomplishment.

One of the best means for overcoming habits of self-limitation is through association with men of broad outlook. Almost every business general has a train of able lieutenants who, by observing his great habit of thought, have acquired something of it themselves. Example is contagious. For the young man entering business, the best possible advice is to find a real leader and to try to absorb his point of view.

The Salesman's Attitude toward Obstacles.

Success in selling—and indeed all success—is closely related to the individual's attitude toward the obstacles that are constantly encountered. This attitude is largely

a matter of habit, built up by repeated reactions to hindering situations. In general we shall find three attitudes, which may be classified as the normal aggressive, the antisocial aggressive, and the introvert, or retreat, reaction.

The normal aggressive reaction meets and overcomes obstacles by the application of more mental and physical

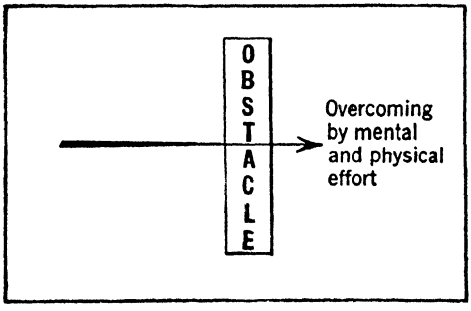

FIG. 8.—Solution 1.

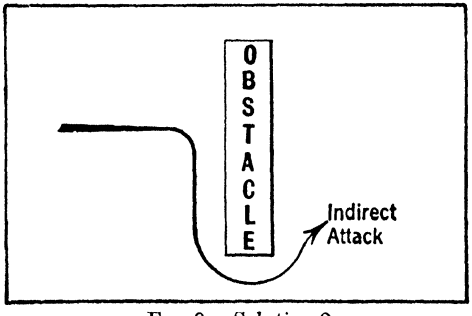

FIG. 9.—Solution 2.

energy. Figure 8 illustrates this concept. It is the sane, satisfactory response to the problems of life. The individual is fortunate who has from childhood been accustomed to meeting difficulties in a forthright manner.

The second, or antisocial, form of aggressive reaction overcomes the obstruction but by unfair or dishonest means. Figure 9 illustrates this idea. As an example we have the person who gets what he wants by threatening or begging or sulking or lying or stealing or any other questionable method.

The third reaction to an obstacle is to run away from it. Figure 10 suggests this type. Here we have a great number of habitual adjustments, including the following:

1. *The Daydream.*—In the daydream the individual usually pictures himself as satisfying a desire that he has been unable to gratify by reason of failure to overcome an obstacle.

2. *The Sour-grapes Reaction.*—Here the individual denies the desirability of something that he has not been able to obtain.

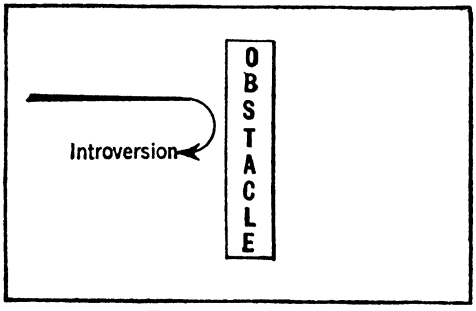

FIG. 10.—Solution 3.

3. *The Pollyanna Reaction.*—Here the individual claims to be happier because he failed to get what he wanted.

4. *The Satisfaction by Proxy.*—Here the individual who has failed to overcome his obstacles contents himself by observing the satisfaction of those who have succeeded. Much fiction reading affords an example of this type of indirect satisfaction.

5. *The Pretense of Success.*—Here the individual who has failed to overcome his obstacles tries, by boasting, bluster, display, pompous manner, to convince others—and perhaps himself—that he has been successful.

6. *The Revolt.*—Here the individual who has failed to overcome his barriers becomes angry and revolts or sulks.

7. *The Wavering Attack.*—Here the individual attacks his obstacles gallantly but soon becomes interested in something else and turns aside before he has surmounted the difficulty.

These are a few of the ways in which individuals habitually meet life's difficulties. It is obvious that the salesman should cultivate the attitude which we have called Type One—the vigorous and aggressive attempt to conquer the obstacle. More than most men he needs this habit, for each day presents a hundred situations in which he is blocked and must find a way to meet a sales difficulty. The man with the habit of retreating cannot hope for any great success in selling.

It should be strongly stressed that the method of meeting problems is a matter of habit. It is a reaction that the salesman can do something about. Any man by a little effort can bring himself to a more courageous, straightforward attitude. By repetition this attitude becomes fixed, a permanent addition to the selling personality.

What Attitudes Do Sales Managers Want in Salesmen?

Sales managers are pretty well agreed that there are certain attitudes that are important for sales success. It is useful to study the opinions of these men of practical experience.

One way to make such a study is to analyze the advertisements for salesmen that appear in the "Help Wanted" columns of the newspapers. In these advertisements some hint of the kind of salesman desired is usually given. The advertiser does not always know, of course, exactly what kind of a man he does want, but the recurrence of descriptive words or phrases in many advertisements suggests in a general way what employers think a salesman is like.

A study of the "Sales Help Wanted" advertisements appearing in *The New York Times* over a period of six months gives data on this point. Two thousand advertisements were analyzed. They were taken from the newspaper as they appeared and were arbitrarily classified into the three conventional groups of retail, wholesale, and specialty selling. They were read carefully for the descriptive words that the would-be employer had used to describe

the kind of salesman desired. A list of these descriptive terms was prepared, and the frequency with which each one was used in the advertisement was tabulated.

This approach resulted in a long list of descriptive terms —far too long for any useful purpose. It was next necessary to classify these numerous terms into kindred groups. This is only crudely possible, since it cannot be known exactly what the advertiser meant by many terms, such as push, ability, and high caliber. The classifications do, however, give a general idea of the importance of various qualities, which is all that can be expected by this method. The following are some of the conclusions.

As to Experience.—Approximately 90 per cent of the advertisements for retail salespeople, 50 per cent of those for wholesale salesmen, and 25 per cent of those for specialty salesmen make some reference to the previous experience of the salesman.

As to Record of Success.—Approximately 6 per cent of the advertisements for retail salespeople, 15 per cent of those for wholesale salesmen, and 20 per cent of those for specialty salesmen make some reference to successful record or ability to furnish references or stipulate minimum previous earnings of the salesman.

As to Knowledge of the Trade.—Advertisements for retail and specialty salesmen do not usually refer to knowledge of the trade, but approximately 13 per cent of those for wholesale salesmen make some reference to the salesman being acquainted with dealers or retail merchants.

As to Established Clientele.—The same is true of the stipulation of an established trade connection. Approximately 25 per cent of advertisements for wholesale salesmen mention that applicants should have a following in the business.

As to Education.—Educational background is seldom mentioned in advertisements for retail and wholesale salesmen. Approximately 6 per cent of the advertisements for specialty salesmen mentioned education as desirable.

PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDES

As to General Competence.—Approximately 24 per cent of advertisements for retail salespeople, 13 per cent of those for wholesale salesmen, and 32 per cent of those for specialty salesmen used a term best classified under the heading of competence. Among terms thus included were the following: ability, bright, capable, producer, expert, money-maker, resourceful, intelligent, first class, high class, high caliber, high type, superior, original, business getter, real salesman.

As to Energy.—Approximately 2 per cent of advertisements for retail salespeople, 6 per cent of those for wholesale salesmen, and 14 per cent of those for specialty salesmen used a term suggesting the desirability of energy. Among the words and phrases thus classified were: energetic, live, live wire, go-getter, healthy, active, wide awake, enthusiastic, eager, enterprising, alert, progressive.

As to Reliability.—Two per cent of advertisements for wholesale salesmen and 8 per cent of those for specialty salesmen indicate that reliability is a desirable trait in salesmen. Terms included under this heading were: reliable, good character, ideals, conscientious, integrity, moral habits, dependable, not a floater.

As to Impression on Others.—Six per cent of retail advertisements, 1 per cent of wholesale, and 10 per cent of specialty "Sales Help Wanted" advertisements mentioned impression created by the salesmen. Included were such terms as good appearance, good approach, address, dignity, personality, manner, tact, culture, breeding, refinement, prestige.

As to Industry.—For retail 1 per cent, for wholesale 3 per cent, and for specialty salesmen 5 per cent of the advertisements mentioned industry as desirable. Terms used included industrious, hard worker, plugger, hustler, willing to work.

As to Force.—For retail approximately 2 per cent, for wholesale 2 per cent, and for specialty 3 per cent of adver-

tisements mention force as a desirable trait. Terms included were: forceful, aggressive, high pressure, strong, initiative, courage.

As to Ambition.—Approximately 2 per cent of advertisements for wholesale salesmen and 5 per cent of those for specialty salesmen mention ambition as desirable. Terms included were ambitious, serious, earnest, desire to improve, want to make money.

These opinions of sales managers as expressed in the "Help Wanted" advertisements give a general idea of the qualities and attitudes expected in the salesman. Although not to be taken as a complete guide, the data contain suggestions that the salesman may well consider.

The Importance of Hard Work.

Sales managers in their talks to salesmen are accustomed to stress the importance of hard work. This is but another way of expressing our principle of concentration. Work is simply the external sign that the salesman is giving all his energies to the job.

That hard work is an element of success should be obvious, but the results of an investigation reported by Winslow Russell of the Phœnix Mutual Life Insurance Company give specific data.[1] The object of this investigation was to discover causes of differences in production between first-rate and second-rate producers. Mr. Russell reports:

A line was arbitrarily drawn between men who sold $250,000 worth of insurance a year and those who were admittedly good but who sold less.

Our investigation studied individual sales records and the field in which these records were made. It comprised a classification of sales by the occupation of the prospect, the number of calls made, and the size of the individual sales. These studies showed indisputably that differences between individual sales totals are almost entirely due to hard work. Plans and programs were discovered to play a minor and

[1] RUSSELL, WINSLOW, vice-president, Phœnix Mutual Life Insurance Company, We Find What Makes a Super-salesman, *System*, April, 1926, p. 512.

not a major rôle. . . . Since we learned that the star salesman and runners-up alike made sales to every class, and the runners-up made large sales as well as small sales, our statistics show that the difference was wholly in the volume, not the kind of sales. Consequently, aside from sales due to minor deviations in natural ability, which deviations apparently existed in both classes and could be practically disregarded, the higher sales totals went to the men who worked hardest, those who made the largest number of sales in all classes.

By crowding in an extra sale every other week the stars averaged 63 sales annually, against 37 sales by the runners-up. That they sold to twice as many men with incomes greater than $10,000 and to three times as many with incomes greater than $5,000, as did the others, will not surprise those who believe large totals are accumulated by confining effort to wealthy buyers. But such critics may be interested in learning that almost the same proportion held for sales to those with incomes of $4,000, $3,000, $2,000, and $1,000 a year. The leaders sold even more to those with incomes of less than $5,000 than to those with large incomes. . . . The figures once more vindicate conclusively . . . work as a condition of success.

A study of wholesale salesmen reported by Nolen[1] supports this conclusion, with the additional suggestion that the extra effort may well be devoted mostly to actual selling rather than to correlated activities. The investigation showed that salesmen who spent more than 100 minutes per day in selling—as contrasted with order taking—secured an average sales volume that was more than twice the average for those who spent less than 50 minutes per day. Figure 11 shows, for 20 salesmen, a comparison of the average time per call spent in selling and the dollar sales volume secured.

Tests of Selling Abilities and Attitudes.

In Chapter IV mention was made of attempts to develop tests by which the selling ability of an individual can be measured and predicted. Some of the results have been very suggestive, and they are especially interesting in connection with the present discussion in that they throw light upon the question of desirable sales attitudes.

[1] NOLEN, HERMAN C., and HAROLD H. MAYNARD, "Sales Management," p. 384. The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1940.

Freyd,[1] for example, tried to find tests that would show significant differences between salesmen and other men whose interests were supposed to be along mechanical lines. He made use of a great variety of tests and questionnaires,

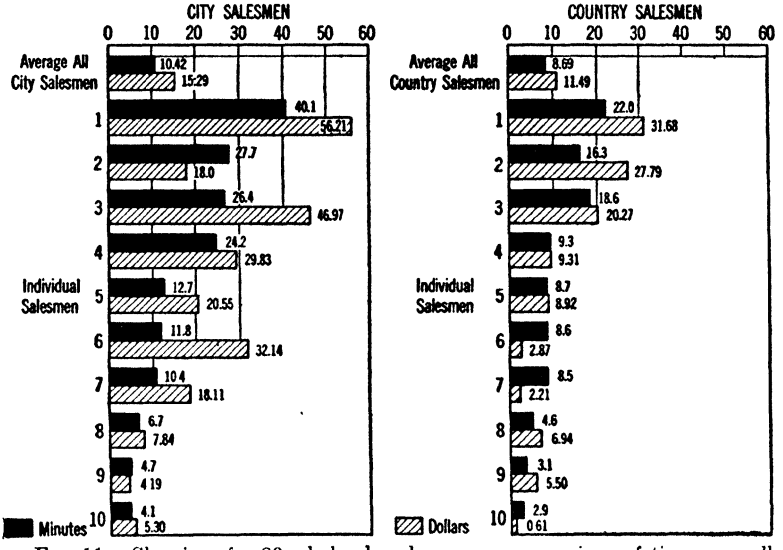

FIG. 11.—Showing, for 20 wholesale salesmen, a comparison of time per call spent in selling and sales, in dollars. (*From Nolen and Maynard, "Sales Management," The Ronald Press Company*, 1940.)

designed to measure a wide range of personality traits. He found that in many lines there was no clear difference between the sales group and the mechanically inclined. In certain cases, however, significant differences did appear. As a result of his investigation he reports that the following are probably more characteristic of salesmen than of other members of the population:

CHARACTERISTIC SALES TRAITS

(Adapted from Freyd)

1. Self-confidence.
2. Talkativeness.
3. Social ability.
4. Adaptability.
5. Present-mindedness.
6. Good nature.
7. Excitability.
8. Credulity.

[1] FREYD, MAX, The Personalities of the Socially and the Mechanically Inclined, *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. 33, No. 4, whole No. 151, pp. 1–101, 1924.

It should be remembered that this list is based upon actual measurements, not upon individual opinion, and is therefore to be regarded as significant.

Another investigator, Ream,[1] conducted a study of the differences in personality traits among groups of salesman of different degrees of success. He wanted to discover if very successful salesmen did better on the various tests than did the sales failures. He used practically the same list of tests as did Freyd, and his results show considerable agreement. He concludes that the following traits are likely to be found in the sucessful salesman in more than average degree:

CHARACTERISTIC SALES TRAITS

(Adapted from Ream)

1. Extroversion.
2. Flexibility.
3. Independence.
4. Dislike of the morbid.
5. Uncritical acceptance of the conventional.
6. Preference for people rather than for things.
7. Faith in the established order.
8. Geniality and cordiality.
9. Medium intelligence.
10. Medium education.

Ream thinks that ability to sell is not a unit character that can be indicated by the presence or absence of one distinguishing mark. It is rather a grouping of many personality traits, the most favorable grouping depending upon the particular circumstances, such as the product to be sold, the market, the customer. However, some characteristics may appear in more-than-average degree in successful salesmen in all lines. Recent evidence indicates that *extroversion* may be such a general sales trait. By extroversion is meant that the individual is not subject to internal conflict, not oversensitive, not shy, not diffident, not given to daydreaming but is in general expansive, talkative, well adjusted to the world and to people. Ream says that the salesman is characteristically an extrovert.

[1] REAM, M. J., "Ability to Sell," The Williams & Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1924.

Evidence from Retail Selling.

These conclusions with regard to the qualities of successful salesmen are supplemented by the observations of Anderson,[1] who studied retail salespeople in the R. H. Macy & Company department store. He found very decided evidence that extroverts are more successful in retail selling. Aggressiveness—the ability to go after and secure sales—is important. The low-cost-of-selling groups are also found to be more alert, more ambitious, more convincing, pleasanter, better integrated, more responsive, more purposeful, possessing greater initiative. Slow and underactive personalities are not likely to become good producers, according to this authority.

Studies by Dodge[2] lend support to these findings. Working with the Bernreuter Personality Inventory, the investigator found 41 items that seemed significant. He attempted to group these items according to traits indicated. From his results the following tentative suggestions may be made:

1. Successful salespeople are less moody and worry less.
2. Successful salespeople are more self-sufficient and self-confident.
3. Successful salespeople are more aggressive and willing to assume responsibility.
4. Successful salespeople are more social.
5. Successful salespeople are less self-conscious.
6. Successful salespeople are less desirous of telling others of personal fortune.
7. Successful salespeople are less resentful of criticism or discipline.
8. Successful salespeople tend to report themselves as more radical or unconventional.

Summary and Conclusions.

From these various lines of evidence certain facts stand out. The personality of the successful salesman is made up of a complex of traits and habits. There is no one

[1] *Op. cit.*

[2] DODGE, A. F., What Are the Personality Traits of the Successful Salesperson? *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 22, pp. 229–238, 1938.

formula. Effective salesmen, however, are likely to be extrovert, aggressive, active, purposeful, sociable, enthusiastic, persevering. They are less subject to fears, self-consciousness, daydreams, apathy, indifference, self-imposed limitations.

When we seek a method by which the desirable sales traits may be cultivated, we find that the most practical and helpful expedient is simply to practice the habit of concentrating attention on the main objective—the sale. To do this the salesman must turn his attention outward. He thinks less about himself, his fears, his sensations, his conflicts. He cultivates the ability to keep his mind on the customer, the customer's mental state, the best method for influencing favorable reactions. He keeps pressing toward a successful conclusion of the interview, instead of allowing himself to be sidetracked by interfering and irrelevant thoughts. He cultivates and maintains the selling attitude.

Questions and Exercises

1. Describe the selling attitude.
2. How can the salesman employ autosuggestion in acquiring the selling attitude?
3. What methods may be used to overcome self-consciousness?
4. Discuss this statement: The daydreams of today are the realities of tomorrow.
5. What are the characteristics of the introvert personality?
6. What personality traits do sales managers consider most important in a salesman?
7. What personality traits do tests show to be important in selling?
8. Discuss this statement: Real salesmen are born, not made.

Suggested Readings

CANFIELD, BERTRAND R.: "Salesmanship: Practices and Problems," Chap. II, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1940.

DOUBMAN, J. RUSSELL: "Salesmanship and Types of Selling," Chap. VII, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1939.

KENAGY, H. G., and C. S. YOAKUM: "The Selection and Training of Salesmen," Chaps. XI, XII, XIII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1925.

RUSSELL, FREDERIC A., and FRANK HERMAN BEACH: "Textbook of Salesmanship," 3d ed., Chap. IV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1941.

CHAPTER X

THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE—DRAMATIZATION

The customer buys in order to satisfy his wants, needs, and desires. Frequently, however, since most products in the same line are pretty much alike, he has the opportunity to choose one of several, all of which seem to promise equal satisfaction. It is here that good selling steps in and by dramatizing some novel and appealing feature of the particular product lifts it out of the commonplace, giving it first position in the customer's attention.

Modern selling affords countless examples of the successful application of this principle of commercial imagination. Listerine was considered just an ordinary mouth wash until an advertising genius introduced it to the public as a remedy for halitosis—which was itself merely a long word in the dictionary until this same clever salesman gave it to the public. Puffed Wheat was just another breakfast food until Claude Hopkins stirred the imagination of the housewife by this "food shot from guns." Life Savers dramatized the hole in the candy. Ford made his commonplace product front-page news the world over.

These advertising and sales successes illustrate the fact that a good product may enjoy but meager attention from the public until some alert mind discovers the appealing idea that will focus the customer's interest. Good selling makes the product stand out. The salesman of today must be master of this kind of creative thought.

The Need for Creative Imagination.

Every product has a story in it. Every product has some point that, properly presented, will interest the

customer. It requires only sympathetic insight to find it.

The salesman who complains that his proposition is just like every other similar product should remember Soo Ling's rug. L. E. McGivena of the New York *News* told its story.

In an obscure village, Soo Ling last year wove a rug. Now for hundreds of years the Lings have been weavers of rugs. They know wool by the thread. Their dyes are a heritage, secrets set down by exalted ancestors, to ensure the brightest and most long-lived of gracious colors. In times past, the fruit of the Ling looms was always offered for the first choice of the Emperors, and as a mark of the imperial patronage the Lings were privileged to weave in the fifth toe to the majestic Dragon of Infinity. The art and skill and lore of 2,000 years have come down to these weavers. And so last year, Soo Ling wove a rug. It had a border of gold that shone in the light like a girl's blond hair. It was embellished with bats and tea flowers and other ancient symbols, to bring fair fortune, conjugal happiness, strong sons, and long life to the family whose floors it gladdened. It had a field of blue, broken only by the central design of the enduring Dragon, a blue you will find in no sky or sea in this world, a blue more beautiful than a child's eyes or wood smoke or the mist that hangs over far hills. Now it is a tedious task to sit on a small scaffold day after day, tying 22 tight knots to the inch; monotonous knots of unbroken blue. But when he had done with his weaving, Soo Ling felt that his rug was worthy of the finest of his forefathers. The skill and art and critical judgment of 60 generations had blossomed happily in his handiwork. In due time, the rug was bought by a buyer, and shipped to a store in this country of great riches. The store advertised Soo Ling's rug with others. Faced by this masterpiece, the copy writer wrinkled his brow and thought lengthily. Three days later the advertisement appeared. It read: "A Special Selling of Chinese Rugs. Room size, mostly 9 x 12. An Unrivalled Collection at $315. Period."[1]

Just another rug! We may venture the guess that the rug salesman in turn exhibited the same lack of appreciation of Soo Ling's handiwork. When showing it to a customer he probably said: "There's a nice rug. It's a Chinese rug. Made in China. It's very nice." One

[1] Quoted by special permission from the promotional literature of the *News*.

rug is much like any other, and all are rather dull and uninteresting—unless one has imagination.

Methods of Dramatizing the Product—Action.

Numerous devices may be used in dramatizing the product and the sales presentation. One of the simplest and also one of the most effective is the use of *action.*

A man demonstrating fountain pens in a drugstore window illustrates the extreme use of this method. As the salesman stands in the window, he waits until he catches the eye of a passing pedestrian. Then, with a quick movement, he holds a pen up for inspection. Next he takes a telephone book and jabs the point of the pen into the thick book with all his strength. Then he pulls the pen out, seizes a piece of paper, and demonstrates by a few strokes that the pen will write perfectly in spite of the rough treatment that it has received. Then he points to a cardboard sign that gives the price of the pen. Finally, if the passerby has stopped to watch this demonstration, the salesman points toward the door of the store, inviting him to come in for a personal trial of the pen. A great many people stop to watch this salesman, and some of them go in to buy.

People are almost always interested in action, especially action with a purpose. Even a revolving flywheel or any machine that monotonously repeats the same performance over and over has some interest. If the action is climactic—that is, working up to a grand finale after a cycle of preparation—it is still more interesting. A steam shovel affords a good example. People will watch a shovel for hours. In the same way they are interested in watching a waitress turn pancakes in a restaurant window. All displays showing the product in action are apt to draw a crowd.

The salesman may dramatize his product either by an active demonstration involving its use or by getting the customer to use the product actively. A spark-plug

salesman demonstrates the quality of his product and at the same time arouses interest by carrying a stone which he hammers with the plug. A kitchen-cabinet salesman set his cabinet up on the sidewalk and beat it with a bed slat until a crowd collected—and then sold a cabinet on the strength of his demonstration.[1] A salesman selling hosiery, house to house, carries a nail file and arouses interest and conviction by scraping the file along the inside of the hose, demonstrating the strength of the fabric. He also shows the strength of the threads by knotting the stocking around some heavy article of furniture and pulling very hard or by getting the customer to engage in a tug of war, using the stocking as a rope. Salesmen of trousers and overalls use similar demonstrations.

If the product itself is not suitable for dramatic action, the salesman may use the device of drawing pictures to illustrate his point. An insurance agent, for example, arouses interest by drawing a picture of a house. This house, he explains as he works, represents the customer's home, as he would like to have it. Then he draws the foundation of this ideal home—the financial income of the customer. Then he asks: "What portion of your income would continue after your death?" For most men this proportion is small, perhaps a quarter of the present income. The agent then crosses out three-fourths of the foundation of the house. "What's going to happen to your house when three-fourths of the foundation is removed?" he asks.

Allowing the Customer to Handle the Product.

It is also frequently a good thing to let the customer demonstrate for himself that the product will perform as claimed. This method is not only more convincing—and this is important—but also more interesting. When

[1] This and several other illustrations in this chapter appeared originally in the pages of *Printers' Ink.*

you get the customer into action, he is pretty sure to be interested in what he is doing, and some of that interest is transferred to the product.

Salesmen for products that can be manipulated, such as can openers, razor stroppers, mousetraps, and cigar lighters, frequently find that the most effective sales approach is to hand the product to the customer and let him play with it. Most of us are like children in our love of manipulation of objects. We like to tap the keys of a typewriter or operate a cash register or an adding machine. It is proverbial that father gets almost as much pleasure out of a new electric train as does the youngster for whom it was purchased.

Sometimes it is not possible to allow the prospect to manipulate the machine, but by the use of a small model he may be shown "how it works." This is almost always interesting. The small boy's curiosity that impels him to take the family clock apart is also active in adults. The salesmen for a heat-regulating device to be attached to a furnace capitalize this fact about human nature by carrying a miniature model that actually operates when heat is applied. The model is ingeniously designed so that it may be taken apart to show how it works. Salesmen carrying it are almost sure of interested attention.

The Novel Combination of Familiar Things.

A second method of dramatizing a product is to place it in some unusual setting. A novel combination of familiar things is almost always interesting.[1] A watch, for example, is a familiar object, and so is a cake of ice. A cake of ice with a watch frozen in the center of it is not so familiar. Because of its novelty it is fairly sure to attract attention.

The principle here involved is subject to almost infinite variation. Aluminum salesmen dramatize their demonstrations by baking biscuits in an aluminum skillet.

[1] Prof. E. K. Strong has developed this idea in several of his works on selling.

Barking Dog tobacco used to have a live dog that walked around with a pipe in his mouth. A restaurant gets attention by its window in which are displayed familiar objects or animals carved out of potatoes, watermelons, or cheese or molded out of pastry. A cigar salesman has a car with the body shaped like a cigar. A jeweler has a kitten in his window with a diamond ring tied to one leg. A biscuit manufacturer demonstrates the waterproof qualities of his package and at the same time attracts much attention by showing a little pool with live ducks swimming around in it among floating packages of his product.

A special application of this device is the dramatization of an uncommon use or quality of the product. Thus the aluminum salesmen just referred to close many sales for their omelet pan by showing that it can also be used for popping corn. A manufacturer of oil attracted attention by recommending that his oil be used on the face in shaving. The Morton Salt Company discovered that salt gives tea a mellow taste, neutralizes acids in citrus fruits, and when added to rinsing water keeps garments from freezing on the clothesline in cold weather. The package or container is frequently a source of a novel idea. Thus a baking-powder can lid may be used to cut out cookies. A tea salesman caught the fancy of his fisherman dealers by showing that the tea box made an ideal container for fish bait.[1]

Of course, these novel combinations and uses must be sensible as well as interesting and amusing. Used with this caution in mind, the device has wide applications.

The Human-interest Method.

A third method of dramatizing a product or a sales approach depends upon the fact that people and their activities are always interesting. The movies, the theater, novels, short stories, magazines, and newspapers—all

[1] From *Printers' Ink.*

afford evidence of the appeal of human experiences. Haldeman-Julius, publisher of the little blue books, found that the volume "The Mystery of the Iron Mask," increased remarkably in sales when he changed the title to "The Mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask."

An insurance agent recently made use of the human-interest device in a striking fashion. He was carrying several policies that named his little girl as beneficiary. To dramatize this situation he pinned the policies together to make a paper dress and took a picture of the child in it, "completely covered by insurance." The picture never failed to arouse interest and to convey a concrete impression of the benefits of insurance.

The Suspense Method.

Effective drama almost always involves the element of suspense—the waiting for the solution of a problem or a situation. Frequently the salesman can borrow this device to advantage in creating interest in a product. A. H. Deute, for example, tells of a salesman for the Borden Company who worked out a unique method of arousing interest in his brand of condensed milk. He would walk into a grocery and ask for the cat. The unusual nature of the request would at once arouse curiosity. When the cat was found, the salesman would open several cans of milk of different brands. Pouring out a bit from each can, the salesman would allow the cat to make its choice. Usually the cat would lap up the milk of the brand represented by the salesman, which gave him a chance to explain that his was nearest natural flavor and was preferred by cats for this reason. The unusual nature of the demonstration and the curiosity with which its outcome was awaited created a deep impression.

A tea salesman employed the same method. He carried a small kettle and a portable heater, which he would set up on a counter in the store and brew a sample cup for the grocer. By his conversation and the unusual

nature of his preparations he managed to hold interest and to inject a dramatic quality into his call.

Vacuum-cleaner salesmen follow the same formula when they sprinkle sand and lint on the rug, then show the efficiency of their machine in quickly removing the dirt. A car salesman achieved drama in his demonstration by driving to the foot of a steep hill, handing the prospective customer a stop watch, and showing the rate at which the car would pick up speed. A man selling windshield wipers carried a small atomizer with which he sprayed the glass and then demonstrated the ease with which his device wiped the surface clean.

In all these cases we find an initial period of preparation during which the interest of the customer is aroused, followed by some performance that demonstrates the good qualities of the product and ends the suspense as to the outcome of the test. Where this method is possible, it is usually favored by salesmen.

The Dramatic Question.

The dramatic question is another tool that salesmen use with considerable effect. For example, a salesman for a wholesale hardware house approaches dealers with the query: "Do you have a selling organization that could handle a high-grade line of tools?" A house-to-house canvasser for brushes asks the housewife, "Have you heard about our new triple-purpose brush?" A book salesman asks, "Have you children who ask you questions you can't answer?"

The theory of these questions is that they present a problem or help visualize a need and that the mind of the customer is thus prepared for the second step, the solution of the problem by the means advocated by the salesman. Salesmen who meet the excuse, "not interested," frequently favor this form of approach as helpful in getting a hearing. The chief danger is that the ques-

tion may easily sound impertinent or create the atmosphere of pressure and thus arouse resistance.

Emphasis on Some Detail.

A sixth method is the old familiar one of placing special emphasis upon some particular detail or "talking point." Thus varnish salesmen play up various tests of wear or resistance to extreme temperature or the action of water. A refrigerator salesman has a "silence test" to show how quiet his machine is. A golf-ball manufacturer used an X-ray test to show that the core of his product was uniformly round. Tire-valve salesmen were trained to use a bubble test to show that their product was airtight.

The object of these demonstrations is to drive home the claims made for the product. Such demonstrations, repeated with or without variation, may so emphasize a certain quality of a product that the public forgets that other products have the same qualities. Thus Valspar varnish came to be associated with water-resisting qualities; Old Gold cigarettes, with a blindfold test; Ivory soap, with purity.

An important device for focusing attention on the special quality or feature of a product is the model or drawing that shows by a cutaway section how the inside of the machine looks. Thus the manufacturer of a refrigerator dramatized his product by means of a small window, set in the side to show the cork construction within. A shoe salesman has a shoe cut in half. A cigar store displays a cross section of a new pipe.

Along much the same line is the use of a microscope. Some salesmen carry a small hand lens by which they can demonstrate fine workmanship, even texture, or other qualities not clearly apparent to the unaided eye.

Dramatizing of a Selling Point by Novel Proof.

It is sometimes possible to secure a proof of a selling point that is itself novel and interesting. For example,

the Hoover Vacuum Sweeper Company found that the rugs carpeting the lobbies of Grove Park Inn at Asheville, North Carolina, had been cleaned daily with a Hoover cleaner. They used this fact as a testimonial. They were able to secure a whole rug that had been used in the hotel and cut it up into pieces, which were sent to dealers to be used for display and sales purposes. The sample showed the fine condition of the rug after having been cleaned daily for over ten years.[1]

Along somewhat the same line was the use of an automobile caravan by an automobile company. One claim of this manufacturer was that there were no drastic changes from year to year in the car. To show this convincingly, cars representing the models brought out over a period of four years were sent out together in a caravan to tour the country, demonstrating in a concrete way the few recent changes.

Dramatizing by Method of Presentation.

A salesman for a wallboard manufacturer was presenting a report to an architect and wished to make it especially impressive. He at length hit on the idea of making a binder out of his product and used that as a cover for his data. By this little expedient he made his presentation stand out head and shoulders above the others made at the same time.

Another salesman dramatizes his story by the use of a double lead pencil, one end of which writes in black and the other end in red. This salesman has learned to write upside down; so as he leans over a counter or desk, he jots down his figures—in black when he is talking about profits, in red when he suggests possible losses.[1]

In recent years many companies have found it profitable to equip their salesmen with pocket-size projectors

[1] *Printers' Ink.*

for slide films. These films may illustrate a strong talking point or may even serve as a framework for the entire sales talk. The salesman sits by the prospect's desk, projects the pictures on some convenient wall or screen, and tells his story. For many products this is a very effective method of presentation.

Dramatizing by Special Service.

The ninth method of dramatizing the product is by rendering a special service that becomes associated with the product or company. Thus a hotel may make it a point to supply a morning newspaper for each guest. The clothing merchant employs the same idea when he gives the boys a baseball bat with each suit.

Large companies find this method very useful in holding the attention of their dealers. The salesmen for a cement company, for example, find that the discussion of price and delivery—about the only talking points for cement—begin to wear out after repeated use. To meet this situation the company has prepared an elaborate program for the study of the dealer's problems. Books on selling, yard layout, credits and collections, delivery costs, and other topics of great interest and importance to the dealer are distributed by the salesman. They give him a point of contact, a dramatic approach that would be hard to find in the product itself.

Nor is the use of this method limited to the elaborate efforts of large organizations. The individual salesman, if he has imagination and initiative, can devise a novel and interesting service that will help dramatize the sale. One salesman, selling to grocers, had a collection of pictures of window displays and charts of store arrangements. A tire salesman carried a book of clippings, facts and figures, and analyses of business conditions, which he found of practical interest to his dealers. Another salesman gets the new books on business as they come out and gives or lends copies to his customers who are interested.

There are dozens of variations of this idea which may be used with profit.

Why Dramatization of the Product Has Selling Value.

The most obvious value of all of these methods of dramatization of the product or the presentation of the salesman is that they get and hold attention, which, in this busy age, is very important. Attention is the first mental process in the sale, and without it the rest of the presentation is blocked.

A second value arises from the fact that these dramatic demonstrations are usually more convincing than words could be. In most cases the climax of the demonstration or device is the exposition of an important reason for buying, with a vivid background of evidence that cannot be disputed. When a mattress company runs a 10-ton road roller over the product and then shows that the mattress is uninjured, that is pretty strong evidence that their claims are justified.

In the third place, these dramatic presentations are easy to remember. In part this is due to the fact that they get extraordinary attention. The intensity of the impression that they make is also an important element in giving them memory value.

Finally, these methods are effective because they convey an abstract idea in a concrete form. People think more easily in concrete terms. It is much more impressive for the collar salesman to demonstrate that he can tie a knot in his collar without injury to the fabric than merely to state the fact in words. When a salesman for an ink remover says that his product is effective, the customer probably believes him but has only a hazy idea of what "effective" means. But let the salesman daub some red ink on his shirt cuff and then erase it as if by magic; the customer then has a vivid notion of what the salesman is talking about. Follow every abstract statement with a concrete example. Hundreds of years ago

Aesop illustrated this method, and his fables have lasted to this day as models of clearness and convincingness.

Dramatic Appeals to Be Used with Care.

With all its advantages, dramatic selling has certain dangers that the enthusiastic salesman would do well to note. A story about a well-known executive illustrates the point. When he started out as a young salesman, he was so impressed with the necessity for getting attention that he devised a unique method. He had an American flag mounted on a sharp iron spike. When he walked into a store, he would jam the end of the spike into the floor or the top of a wooden counter. The merchant would usually want to know what the flag was for. To this question the salesman would answer brightly: "To celebrate the order I am going to get"—a dramatic approach, but not a very effective one.

Many dramatic ideas are like this—interesting in themselves but not sound selling. The customer resents anything that is too theatrical, too unrelated to ordinary business methods. He will watch with interest any demonstration that clearly leads to the establishment of a sensible conclusion. He does not want to waste time on clowning or irrelevant vaudeville. Selling is a serious business.

Another danger is that the dramatic idea may lack real buying appeal. It does not tie up with the basic motives for wanting the goods. In his very interesting book "Imagination in Business," Deland gives several cases illustrating this point. There was, for example, the attempt to bring the congress-gaiter shoe back into style when its vogue was threatened by the increased use of lace and button shoes. After much thought Deland hit upon the idea of offering a life insurance policy with each pair of shoes, this policy to pay $10,000 to the beneficiary of anyone who was killed in a railroad accident while wearing congress gaiters. But the scheme did not

work. It was too foreign to the real reasons for buying or not buying the product. It caused talk, but it could not stem the trend to other styles of footwear.

Summary and Conclusion.

To summarize the foregoing, we have seen that good selling lifts the product out of the commonplace by the use of dramatic, and appealing methods. The most widely used methods are the following:

1. Dramatizing by action.
2. By a novel combination of familiar things.
3. By human interest.
4. By the use of suspense.
5. By the dramatic question.
6. By emphasis on some detail.
7. By novel proof of some selling point.
8. By the method of presentation.
9. By some special service.

The salesman will find it profitable to acquire the habit of devising and using these methods of dramatization. By a little effort any salesman can add new methods to his collection. It is a good thing to keep a file or memorandum book where a record of such dramatic selling ideas may be stored for reference. Seek constantly for new and better ways to present the sales story.

Questions and Exercises

1. From your own experience give three examples of effective dramatization in selling.

2. Give three examples of harmful application of the principle of dramatization.

3. Make a careful analysis of the reason for the failure of a number of dramatic appeals.

4. How could a manufacturer of common wrapping twine dramatize his product?

5. Can you think of some product that could not be dramatized?

6. Suggest methods of dramatization that might be used by a successful house-to-house salesman in applying for a position in the sales organization of a manufacturer of washing machines.

7. Look over the advertisements in several current magazines, and make a study of the methods of dramatization in common use. Report any new devices not listed in the text.

Suggested Readings

DOUBMAN, J. RUSSELL: "Salesmanship and Types of Selling," Chap. XI, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1939.

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CHAPTER XI

THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE—FAVORABLE CLASSIFICATION

From the salesman's point of view one of the most important mental processes is that which the psychologists call *perception*. In everyday language this simply means the process of "sizing up" and of classifying. Because the customer is busy making classifications during almost every instant of the sale, an understanding of the mental machinery involved is of the greatest interest. In fact, a little thought will convince us that inducing favorable classification is a fundamental principle of good selling.

Several Classifications Usually Possible in the Sale.

If every object and situation were always perceived in exactly the same way by every person, this process of classification would not be so vital. The truth is, of course, that every proposition has several aspects, and it is the business of the salesman to present his offering in such a way as to emphasize the favorable angles, always assuming that the proposal is a sound one and that the salesman will be careful not to trick or deceive by this method.

A familiar illustration of this fact of varied perception is the old fable of the blind men who went to investigate the elephant. One of them grasped the elephant's trunk and declared that he was very much like a snake. The second blind man found the elephant's tusk and exclaimed that he was like a spear. Another touched the elephant's ear and found him like a fan. The one who put his hands on the elephant's leg thought that he most resembled a post. One explored his great side and argued that he

was like a wall. And the sixth blind man seized the elephant's tail, and to him the beast was very much like a rope.

Everyone recognizes this truth: The same object may appear differently to different people and to the same people at different times. We say that the optimist sees the doughnut and the pessimist sees the hole in it. Aesop pointed out that the perception of an injury depends upon whose bull is gored. Distant pastures look greenest. One man's meat is another's poison. Things are sometimes better in anticipation than in realization. Our mountains are other people's molehills.

Applying all this to the sale, exactly the same article or proposal may be perceived in many ways. For example, a businessman may see an automobile as an operating expense. A youth sees it as adventure, romance, escape. The housewife sees it as a means of going places. A social climber sees it as a badge of superiority. The automobile salesman sees a commission. The traffic policeman sees another potential law violation.

Even the same individual may make several classifications of the car. He may see it as a luxury, as a business expense, as a means of relaxation, as an unnecessary financial drain. Selling is largely a matter of keeping the favorable classifications uppermost in the mind of the customer.

Favorable and Unfavorable Classifications.

The prospect's mental state as he sorts and classifies sales proposals may be compared to that of a mail clerk as he sorts letters into various sacks. The clerk stands before a rack holding bags labeled for various destinations. The letters going to the far west are tossed into one sack. Another bag receives the letters with eastern addresses or for the south, and so on. Swiftly the letters are dropped into the appropriate compartments, and the clerk goes on to other duties.

In like fashion the customer has a number of pigeonholes into which he classifies sales appeals. Here are some of those more frequently used:

Favorable Classifications	Unfavorable Classifications
Profitable.	Costs a great deal.
Saves time.	Would mean extra trouble.
Saves effort.	No profit in it.
Recommended by others.	New proposition.
Friend's suggestion.	Presented by a stranger.
Easy to get.	Recalls something unpleasant.
Easiest thing to do.	Is theoretical.
Does not cost much.	Would take a lot of time.
Would be pleasant.	Is of poor quality.
Would be useful.	Company not dependable.
Would protect.	Would mean loss of prestige.
Made by a well-known firm.	Would mean loss of other satisfaction.

In the same way the customer sizes up the salesmen whom he meets and mentally consigns them to a favorable or an unfavorable category. Some salesmen he likes at first sight, and these he meets in a friendly, open way. To others he takes an immediate dislike, and nothing that they do is received graciously.

Favorable Classification Important in Asking for the Interview.

It is clearly important that the salesman secure favorable classification from the first moment of contact with the customer. In many forms of selling this first contact occurs when the salesman approaches and seeks an interview. The clever salesman plans this approach carefully. Specific methods in common use will be discussed in Chapter XVI when we consider the problems met in solicitation.

Favorable Classification Is Important in Beginning the Interview.

It is sometimes said that the first five seconds is the most important period of the sales interview. Certainly

in many kinds of selling this first five seconds—the period of initial size-up—decides how the customer is going to receive the sales proposal. If in that first instant the salesman wins a favorable classification, he is off to a good start and the rest of the sale is made much easier.

In that instant, at the beginning of the interview, the customer makes a classification of the salesman based largely upon the following factors:

1. The impression created by the salesman's physical characteristics; that is, his height, size, appearance of strength, health, personal force, and so on.
2. The impression created by the salesman's dress; that is, his appearance of neatness, prosperity, cleanliness, style, and so on.
3. The impression created by the salesman's manner; that is, his poise, his appearance of knowing what he is about, and so on.
4. The impression created by the salesman's words.

Books on selling have laid down literally hundreds of rules for salesmen covering these points. Salesmen are told to dress carefully, avoiding extreme fashions, striking ties, flashy jewelry, perfumes, lodge buttons, rings, and the like. They are told to be clean, neat, immaculate as to clothing, shoes, fingernails, breath, and so on. They are told to smile, to look the prospect in the eye, to shake hands in a forceful but not too forceful manner, to stand erect, to avoid nervous gestures. They are told to avoid talking about themselves, to avoid the nervous laugh, to avoid the stereotyped introduction.

Probably most of these suggestions are good and useful. They are not of much value, however, unless the salesman understands the underlying philosophy, the goal at which they aim. The most important rule is for the salesman to keep clearly in mind the fact that he is trying to induce a favorable classification on the part of the customer and that to accomplish this he must try to see how things look from the customer's point of view. That rule supplemented by these other suggestions ought to

enable any salesman to increase the efficiency of his approach.

Favorable Classification Is Important in Presenting the Proposition.

In the actual sale itself, favorable classification is of great importance at each stage of the interview. Every argument, every new fact, every demonstration have to be presented in such a fashion as to win the customer's approval if the sale is to be accomplished in the most desirable manner.

There is one basic rule that the salesman should observe in this connection, and that is: *Try to keep the customer classifying the interview as an opportunity to buy something rather than as a fight against buying.* We have indicated the importance of this principle in a previous chapter, but it is worth repeating here. Try to keep the customer from feeling that he is being sold.

In order to avoid the feeling of effort and pressure in the sale, some salesmen make use of what may be called the *indirect approach.* We shall devote more attention to this method later, but it deserves mention here as an important device in securing favorable classification during the interview. Essentially, this method involves approaching the customer in such a way that his attention is focused on some phase of the proposition, so that he forgets that any idea of selling is involved. As an example, a jewelry salesman casually showed a very beautiful ring to an acquaintance. The acquaintance became interested in the ring and finally asked if he might buy it. Throughout the transaction he never had the feeling that he was being urged to buy.

It is important for the salesman to remember that the customer is seeing the product with new and sometimes critical eyes and that every care should be taken to give the best impression possible. For example, a salesman selling an expensive article will find it helpful to set the

stage for his sale by the use of a velvet cloth on which the article is displayed, and he will place it on this background with great care and in such a manner as to convey the costly and luxurious quality of his product.

Remember also that the prospect is likely to be impressed by any small defect. Avoid the use of chipped samples or specimens that show signs of wear. It does not do much good to explain to the prospect that he will receive a new one. Any defect in the sample article is likely to suggest a defect in the product itself.

Another factor to be observed in the presentation is that it is desirable to approach the prospect at such a time as to ensure the most favorable attention. Everybody knows that the world does not look so rosy at certain times as it does at others. One good salesman takes advantage of this fact by handling all his routine calls in the early morning and calling on his hard customers an hour or so after luncheon. He finds men easier to handle after they have had a good meal.

Favorable Classification Important in Closing the Sale.

The climax of the classification process in the sale is at the moment the customer decides to purchase or not to purchase the article. During the whole period of indecision that is present in most sales, the customer has been holding the proposal suspended, unable to decide in which pigeonhole to place it. With the decision goes a final classification of the sales appeal.

In a later chapter we shall discuss this process of decision. It is sufficient to note here that the good salesman makes every effort to keep the prospect perceiving the goods as easy to get, as satisfactory in every way.

Factors Determining Classification: Experience.

The customer's reactions to the sales proposal are not a matter of chance. Several factors determine the classification to be made in any particular case. Some of these

can be controlled by the salesman; others he cannot influence. In general the most important of these factors are:

1. The customer's experience.
2. The customer's temperament.
3. The customer's attitude at the moment.
4. The aspect of the proposition that catches the prospect's attention.

Of these, experience is one of the greatest determiners of reactions. We all know that a man of forty will see elements in a situation that a youth of fifteen would miss entirely. The housewife sees things in terms of her years in the kitchen. A man with engineering experience will size up any proposal in the light of his training.

It follows that the salesman is most likely to succeed when he knows something about the customer's background and presents his product in such a way as to meet the prejudices and convictions likely to exist in a person of such experience. This requires a sympathetic understanding of the customer's point of view. In an article on "When You Sell to Farmers," W. S. Corsa gives a good example:

Let me illustrate what I mean by putting yourself in the place of the customer. A friend of mine went to an implement dealer's one day, desiring to purchase a type of wagon suitable for using in hauling some very heavy logs out of his timber. The salesman noticed that he seemed to want the wagon very much and at the same time hesitated about deciding on buying it. And so the salesman began to ask questions about the use he would have for the wagon.

When he put himself in the farmer's place, he began to realize that he, too, would hesitate unless—and here is where the salesman used mighty good judgment—some other work could be found especially adapted to this particular kind of wagon. Almost instantly, it occurred to the salesman that he had heard the manager of a lumber company speaking about the difficulty in getting sufficient help to get logs to his mill.

"Why don't you make arrangements with the Hawthin Lumber Company to haul logs during the winter when you haven't much to do on the farm? Mr. Hawthin, the president, told me the other day that he always had difficulty in getting sufficient help during the winter."

That one little idea made the sale, and it is certain that the sale would not have been made at all if it had not been for that suggestion made by the salesman after he put himself in the place of the customer.[1]

The Customer's Temperament Determines His Classifications.

Temperament is also an important factor in determining how the customer will react to a salesman. The man who is irritable, pessimistic, and complaining will see the drawbacks in the proposal. The pleasant, friendly, happy individual will get an entirely different picture.

It would be a great advantage to the salesman if he had some means of classifying temperaments and adjusting his sale to the individual. Various attempts at such analysis have been made, and almost every book on selling gives a long discussion of temperaments and how to deal with them. In actual selling, however, few salesmen find it possible to employ any "system." They are forced to rely upon their own observations and experience. At present there is probably no other practical method. For most salesmen, time spent in learning elaborate schemes of classification of temperaments is probably wasted.

The Customer's Attitude at the Moment.

A third factor controlling the customer's reaction to a proposal is his mental set or attitude of the moment. To the busy man a salesman may seem a troublesome interruption. The same man, approached at a more favorable time, might make an entirely different appraisal. It is a matter of common observation that it is harder to deal with a man when he is hungry, tired, worried, preoccupied. These temporary attitudes influence the classification of the sales presentation. The salesman finds it advisable to wait, if possible, until such a time as the prospect is in a better mood.

The salesman should cultivate the habit of trying to discover the way that the customer is feeling at the moment and to adapt his selling approach to the situation.

[1] *System.*

What the Customer Sees Determines His Classifications.

The fourth, and from the salesman's angle the most important, factor determining the prospect's classification of the sales proposal is the direction of his attention. Every presentation—like the blind men's elephant—may be seen in several ways. No product or idea is perfect in every respect. Each has good points and bad points. It is the salesman's business, within the limits of honesty and fair dealing, to focus attention upon the good points.

The customer cannot see every angle at once. He attends to that phase which comes first to his attention. It is the salesman's work to see that the good points are given fair consideration.

For example, a man was thinking of buying an automobile truck. Since he was of a somewhat miserly nature, he was considering the truck mostly in terms of its cost. A good salesman refused to talk cost to him but insisted upon talking profits to be made through the use of the truck for long hauls. By working out these savings and profits in dollars and cents, he was able to get attention directed to this phase of the transaction and finally sold the truck.

As another illustration, consider the brush salesman. He knows that ordinarily he will not be favorably classified by the housewife. He realizes that he must do something to force her to make a new classification. He leaves a card in the door, promising a free brush. The idea of something free is pretty sure to produce in her mind a favorable classification. When the salesman calls, he has with him a card like the one making the free offer. He stands ready with this in his hand. As the housewife opens the door, he holds the card up, so that it is the first thing she sees. She looks at the card, remembers the free offer, realizes that this salesman has come to deliver the gift. It is very hard for her to react unfavorably toward him and his product.

Notice that all this salesman does is to focus attention on a phase of his proposal that is almost sure to be well received. By holding the card up as soon as she opens the door he leads the housewife to look at it rather than at him or his sample case. If he did not use this approach, she would have a chance to look him over, to classify him as "just another canvasser," and to close the door without hearing what he has to say.

This illustration may well be considered as a clear example of our sixth principle of effective selling. *Good selling induces favorable classification by focusing attention upon favorable aspects.*

Methods of Encouraging Favorable Classification.

There are several methods of inducing the favorable classification. All are based upon this fundamental idea of *directing attention to a favorable point.* They differ, however, in certain respects, and it will be useful to consider them separately.

The first of these devices may be called the "best-foot-foremost" method. It consists in finding an aspect of the proposal that is very likely to attract a favorable reaction and so maneuvering the presentation that the customer sees this aspect. It is somewhat like the old card trick of the stage magician, who by suggestion induces someone in the audience to select the card desired.

The commonest form of this method is simply to select a favorable point and to call attention to it. "Note that set, that style!" says the tailor. "I just want you to notice the paint job on this car," says the used-car salesman.

A variation of this general idea is to phrase the sales talk in such a way as to keep a favorable point in mind. The cash-register salesman, for example, when talking of the price of his machine, speaks of it as only $1.33 a week. This price is regarded more favorably than the total price of the product would be. Somewhat similar

is the method used by most shopkeepers in marking odd prices on commodities, such as 59 cents, 89 cents, and the like. The chain drugstores have discovered some psychological facts here. A drug company,[1] for example, has found that people are not impressed by odd prices of less than a quarter. For a 25-cent article, a price of 19 cents is regarded about the same as any price from 15 to 18 cents. A price of 79 cents is perhaps just as good if not better, as a selling price, than 75 cents. Eighty-nine cents is just as favorable as any price between 79 and 89 cents.

Inducing Favorable Classification by Presenting a New Angle.

A second way of inducing favorable classification is sometimes called the *new-dress method*—that is, finding a new angle that will lead the customer to revise his ideas about the proposal.

This is one of the most popular expedients in selling. Any text on salesmanship will afford a dozen examples, and every salesman has a favorite story of a clever twist to the argument or demonstration that conquered the prejudices of a hard-to-sell customer.

An insurance agent, for example, reports that he had urged a prospect to take out life insurance before a certain date in order to take advantage of the lower rates. The customer was not much impressed by the proposed saving—it amounted to about 50 cents per each thousand dollars of insurance. He felt that if that was all it cost to wait a year, he could afford it. The salesman overcame his hesitation, however, by pointing out that waiting really meant that the same policy would cost 2½ per cent more every year for the rest of the prospect's life. Seen in this light, the difference in cost seemed worth saving.

Installment selling affords a good illustration of this changing of ideas through a new approach. A few years ago most people with limited incomes perceived an auto-

[1] BADANES, B. H., Odd Prices and Their Effect on Sales, *Printers' Ink*, p. 25, Sept. 22, 1927.

mobile as something that only rich people could buy. Then the manufacturers managed to instill the idea that an automobile was something that almost anyone could have by paying a few dollars per week, with the result that a great new market was opened for the sale of cars.

In all of these instances the basic principle is the same: Find a phase that is likely to be favorably received, and give it the center of the stage.

Favorable Classification through Effective Comparisons.

If a man likes home cooking, the advertisement "Like Mother Used to Make" will be effective. If a boy likes candy, tell him that the toothpaste has peppermint in it, and brushing his teeth is less troublesome. If a woman admires Tolstoy, she will be inclined favorably toward the works of some young author described as the "American Tolstoy."

Herein is the basis for a third method of encouraging favorable classification. Discover some point in which your product resembles a product already favorably received. Play up that point of comparison.

For example, a certain shock absorber "makes the car ride like a canoe on a quiet lake." A radio is "like having a dozen phonographs instantly available." A soap is so pure and white that it looks like ivory—from which concept came one of the most effective trade names ever devised. Installing an oil heater is "like finding an extra room in your house." Shaving with a certain razor is "like wiping the lather off with a towel." Sleeping on a certain mattress is "like resting on a giant pillow." Using a dictating machine is "like talking to your correspondent face to face."

Here is a very simple yet a very effective sales tool. The salesman should cultivate the habit of using vivid and convincing comparisons. They are like currants in the pudding—they relieve the monotony—and, if well selected, they keep leading the customer on to finish the dish.

Favorable Classification by Repetition.

People are frequently hostile to new ideas. The history of the steamboat, of the reaper, of the typewriter, and of hundreds of other inventions illustrates this point. Even the radio was at first scorned as "just a toy and a fad" by many people.

By degrees, however, people become accustomed to the new idea. It is like getting a colt accustomed to the saddle. At first he cannot bear even the weight of a blanket on his back. By training, this first resistance is gradually reduced and eliminated.

Salesmen discover that the same principle holds true in selling. When women first see a new style—for example a lengthened skirt—they shy away from it. Then they see other women wearing the style. Gradually they become accustomed to it. Presently they adopt it for themselves and find it hard to realize that they ever wore anything else.

Securing Favorable Classification by the Indirect Approach.

We have noted that any obvious effort to sell arouses resistance. In exactly the same way, if a man thinks that the salesman is trying to present something in an especially favorable light, he may begin looking for the bad points. For such customers the indirect, or casual, approach to an important point may be more effective.

This method is used by a rayon salesman in dealing with a rather ignorant and obstinate buyer. Experience has shown that this customer will fight any suggestions advanced by the salesman. He feels that if a certain pattern is being pushed, there must be something wrong with it. The salesman works right along with this man's mental set. He begins the sale by presenting two or three patterns that he is really not interested in pushing. Presently he casually brings out other patterns, which he displays in indifferent fashion. Almost invariably the buyer becomes

interested in these. Presently he sells himself a bill of goods.

This indirect method of selling has possibilities that many salesmen overlook. A certain brilliant salesman reports that he has never applied for a position; always, when desiring a new connection, he looks around, discovers a promising situation, meets the possible employer "by chance" or in connection with a business conference. He lets the employer discover that here is the very man to fill the vacant position. Presently the salesman is being *asked* to consider the job.

Securing Favorable Classification by the Use of Effective Phrases.

Sometimes the use of a simple word or phrase may lead to favorable classification. A real estate man trains his salesmen to talk about homes—not houses. An insurance salesman talks about his Income Continuance Plan. Adding-machine salesmen talk about the demonstration machine, not the sample. A securities house maintains a Securities Holders' Service Bureau. Another house no longer has a complaints department, but customers with grievances are directed to the Adjustments Division.

This use of words designed to aid favorable perception is widespread. Pool rooms are becoming recreational parlors. The plumber is now a sanitary engineer. The undertaker is a mortician. Secondhand cars are now used cars—and everyone drives a used car. The paper hanger has become an interior decorator. The salesman is a negotiator; a serviceman, a sales engineer; a contact man, a vice-president in charge of merchandising.

Of course some of these fancy names for common things are rather silly. The principle involved, however, is a sound one. It is good selling practice to employ the name or the selling phrase that will bring up a pleasant association in the mind of the customer. Call a cheap car inexpensive. Tell the customer that one foot is

smaller than the other—not larger. Explain that the searchlight will throw a beam one-eighth of a mile—not 750 ft. Words and phrases are the salesman's tools; use them skillfully.

Summary and Conclusions.

During every moment of the sales interview the customer is sizing up and classifying in a favorable or an unfavorable way the salesman and his proposals. For this reason the study of the customer's processes of perception is an important phase of the salesman's training.

In encouraging favorable classification, the salesman's dress, his manner, his physical appearance, his language, and his method of conducting the interview are of great importance. Among the useful methods for inducing a favorable perception are the following:

1. Directing attention to favorable aspects.
2. Favorable classification by presenting a new angle.
3. Favorable classification through effective comparisons.
4. Favorable classification by repetition.
5. Favorable classification by the indirect approach.
6. Favorable classification by effective words and phrases.

At bottom, all these methods owe their effectiveness to the fact that they help concentrate the customer's attention on the desirable features. *Good selling induces favorable classification by concentrating attention upon favorable aspects of the transaction.*

In the successful application of this principle of selling, the salesman needs to cultivate the habit of discovering and using every possible device for encouraging a favorable reaction. No detail of the sales presentation is too small to be studied carefully. The salesman should acquire the habit of thinking: How will the customer react to this? What can be done to secure a favorable response?

Questions and Exercises

1. List five ways in which a fountain pen might be perceived by different people.

2. Mention recent advertising campaigns that you have classified unfavorably. Analyze reasons for your attitude.

3. Tell of a case in which a clever salesman changed what might have been an unfavorable reaction into a favorable one. What method did he use?

4. What factors are important in determining the customer's classification of the salesman?

5. Devise an effective comparison to be used in selling a brand of condensed milk to a housewife.

6. Devise an effective selling phrase to be used in selling an inexpensive radio set to home owners.

Suggested Readings

CANFIELD, BERTRAND R.: "Salesmanship: Practices and Problems," Chaps. XIV, XV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1940.

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RUSSELL, FREDERIC A., and FRANK HERMAN BEACH: "Textbook of Salesmanship," 3d ed., Chap. XII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1941.

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CHAPTER XII

THE SEVENTH PRINCIPLE—CONVICTION

When a man buys a product, he does so because he has a want or urge or desire or need and because he believes that the possession of the particular product will make possible satisfaction. Stripped to its essentials, a sale centers around a *want* and a *belief*. The want supplies the engine—the motive power—and the belief provides the track that gives direction to the impulse.

Belief, according to the dictionary, is a mental state of trust or confidence. When the mental state is produced by the efforts of the salesman, we usually call it a conviction. It will be useful to distinguish between the general background of beliefs that the customer brings to each sale and the induced beliefs—convictions—resulting from effective sales arguments.

An Example of Conviction.

An illustration will make this distinction clearer. Suppose a man wants to buy a new radio. He has investigated several brands and has decided that he wants a certain set costing about one hundred dollars. He calls at a well-known radio store and asks for a demonstration of the set in which he is interested. It performs perfectly. He decides that it is exactly what he wants and takes out his checkbook to pay for it. He asks the price and to his surprise is told that the set sells for $35.

At once the man's mental attitude changes. The price contrasts too sharply with the one hundred dollars that he expected to pay. He recalls the general principle that a very low price means an inferior product. He begins to doubt. Finally he asks the salesman if something is wrong with the instrument.

The salesman tells him that the manufacturer of the set is in financial difficulties. He has had to raise money quickly, and a number of the really excellent receivers are available at ridiculously low prices.

The customer is now thrown into a period of indecision. Mentally he weighs the various facts and values. On the one hand, there is the machine that a moment ago he believed to be perfectly satisfactory. He is interested, of course, in saving money on his purchase. He thinks of the things that he might buy with this money.

On the other hand, he wonders if the set is really all right. He reflects that the manufacturer may fail and that the guarantee of the set will be worthless.

In his doubt he turns to the salesman. "Well," he says, "I had pretty well decided that this was the set I wanted. But now I find that the price is so low, I wonder if it is all right."

"The set is absolutely all right," replies the clerk. "You admit it is what you want. That is the only thing that counts. You know that once a set is installed and in good working order, there isn't much to go wrong, except the tubes. Personally I think the set is a good buy, and you can see for yourself that there would be more profit for us to try to sell you some other higher priced instrument."

"But suppose the manufacturer should go out of business. What guarantee would I have?" asks the customer.

"This set carries our own guarantee, the same as any other set in the house," replies the salesman. "We will stand back of it. After all, our guarantee means more to you than that of the manufacturer. We are right here in town, and you can always reach us, whereas the manufacturer is a long way off. Honestly, if you are worrying about the low price, I think you are foolish. It's a good set, made by a nationally known manufacturer, backed by our service guarantee. If you like it, that's all you need to worry about."

The customer asks for details of the guarantee, deliberates a moment or two, and decides to buy the set, being convinced that it is really a good instrument at a very reasonable price.

The Customer's Need for Conviction.

This sale well illustrates the interplay of wants, beliefs, doubts, and convictions. We see here the guiding part played by the customer's ideas and the salesman's arguments in determining the final decision.

We see also in this sale the very real need of the customer for certain convictions about the set. As a condition of his purchase and in order that he may be satisfied with his purchase after it is made, he requires assurance that the set is really as good as he believes it to be. Good selling supplies such assurance to customers.

This need for conviction arises in almost every sale. The carpenter needs to be convinced that the hammer he is about to buy is of the best steel; the salesman convinces him by telling of the process of the manufacturer. A woman buying cloth wants to be convinced that it is really linen; the clerk convinces her by wetting a corner of the cloth to show how quickly the moisture travels. An investor needs to be convinced that a real estate venture is financially sound; the salesman tells him to call a well-known banker, who knows all about it and whose opinion carries authority. Hundreds of similar illustrations could be given. This task of supplying comforting convictions is one of the most important things that the good salesman has to do.

Never forget that assurance is comforting. The radio buyer wanted to be able to believe that he was getting a real bargain. A man purchasing an automobile may be influenced mostly by his pride or his vision of good times in the car, but he wants to be told that the car is mechanically sound. Sometimes a customer needs to be convinced so that he may defend his purchase from the criticism of others. Sometimes his want may be strong

enough to lead a man to make a purchase; but in order to satisfy his vanity, he needs a little show of the reasons for buying. A good salesman is like a good doctor—he gives people assurance along with his other services. He convinces the customer that he is justified in spending money on the product.

All this is from the customer's point of view. From the purely selfish angle of the salesman, conviction is also important. Conviction is one of the mental stages through which the mind of the customer must pass before the sale can be made. It is vital to the salesman that he know how to convince.

The Customer's Background of Beliefs.

The customer comes to the sale with a background of beliefs. If those notions are not crossed, all is well; but when something arises that runs counter to those beliefs, the customer is frequently upset.

Again the radio sale affords an illustration. The sale was running along smoothly until price was mentioned. The customer held the belief that a cheap radio was necessarily an inferior product. The salesman got around that idea by presenting another idea that he could accept, namely, that the radio was low in price because of the manufacturer's financial situation.

Every customer has a complicated background of such opinions. Some of these are individual, such as "The Packard is a good car," or "Wilson's is a good place to trade." Other beliefs take the form of general principles, such as "You can't buy a good diamond for five dollars," "Eight cylinders are better than six," "There isn't any sense in paying more than seven dollars for a pair of shoes," "A blue suit is always in good taste."

Sources of the Customer's Background of Beliefs.

These beliefs of the customer are like the matted roots of a great tree. They run in every direction, twine, and interlace, so the source is sometimes difficult to discover.

In the sale it frequently happens that the customer does not know why he believes a statement. Perhaps he says he believes it "because"—the traditional woman's reason. The belief simply fits into the twisted complex of ideas that forms the background of his mental life and so seems sound and acceptable to him.

These embedded beliefs come from many sources, most of them unreasoned. Although man prides himself on being a rational creature, many of his ideas are not arrived at by logical processes. A glance at the following list of the origins of beliefs will amplify this idea:

1. *We Believe What We Have Been Told Repeatedly.*—Thus many people believe that Lucky Strike cigarettes are toasted, that Ivory soap is $99\frac{44}{100}$ per cent pure, and that children cry for Castoria.

2. *We Believe What Our Associates Believe.*—Thus we take our mother's word for it that candy is bad for the teeth; we accept our father's idea that life insurance is a poor form of investment for those who can make more than 3 per cent on their money; and we believe the village oracle who says that the chain store will ruin a community.

3. *We Believe the Generalizations from Our Own Experience.*—Thus having had considerable success with an Underwood typewriter, we believe that it is a very good machine. In much the same way a Ford owner believes that "A Ford gives you the most for your money."

4. *We Believe What Sounds Logical.*—Thus we are likely to accept the statement, authoritatively made, that since apples are cheaper than oranges and lemons are more expensive than apples, oranges are more expensive than lemons. This is especially true of logical sounding statements reduced to a short form, such as "It pays to buy the best," "Save the surface and you save all," "If a man needs a thing he pays for it whether he buys it or not."

5. *We Believe the Pronouncements of Authority.*—Thus if a well-known aviator says that a certain airplane is a good one, most of us will accept his opinion.

6. *We Believe What We Want to Believe.*—Thus if we dislike a salesman, we find it easy to believe that his product is inferior. If we want to use selling methods that are not quite honest, we may find it easy to believe that the end justifies the means.

7. *We Believe That Which Is Emotionally Satisfying.*—Thus we believe that the wild-cat oil stock is going to make us rich overnight and that the wrinkle remover will make us ten years younger.

The Process of Conviction: Immediate Acceptance.

Such is the customer's background. Frequently this background supplies all the element of belief necessary in the sale. A woman, for example, may ask for a can of peaches. The grocer gets down a can of Del Monte brand. The woman believes that this is a good brand and without any deliberation accepts the product. Advertising and experience have supplied her with all the beliefs necessary to the sale.

Much selling, however, is not so simple. For many products the customer's existing beliefs are not sufficient. Certain additional ideas are needed. It is the salesman's duty to supply these.

Two mental attitudes may be present in the customer's mind during this process of conviction. They are:

1. The attitude of passive acceptance of the new idea.
2. The attitude of deliberation.

The first type, uncritical acceptance, occurs when the salesman presents an idea that fits into the customer's existing beliefs and introduces it in such a way and at such a time as to arouse no counter-idea. This is a form of suggestion, and we shall have considerable to say about it in Chapter XIV.

As an illustration of this passive, uncritical acceptance, we may note most of our ideas about advertised products. The woman customer just referred to probably

bases her favorable attitude toward Del Monte products on the attractive pictures and alluring copy that are characteristic of their advertising. To take another case, most of us are convinced that Campbell's soup is good, though we may never have tasted it or had any proof or demonstration of its goodness.

In a similar fashion the well-dressed, competent-looking salesman may convey the conviction that his product is effective. When he says, "You can absolutely depend on this to give you good service," his air of authority leads us to accept his words without question.

Salesmen too frequently overlook this method of inducing conviction. They think that to make the customer believe, they have to shower him with arguments. This is wrong. As a matter of economy and of common sense, if you can get a man to accept an idea without taking time and trouble to tear it to pieces, it is certainly the most effective approach.

Conviction Following Deliberation.

Sometimes, however, the customer can be convinced only after a process of deliberation in which he weighs the evidence for and against the proposition. This is especially likely to be true when the ideas presented to him are new or when they seem inconsistent with something that he already believes.

As an illustration, consider the case of three customers in a drugstore.

Several men were talking in a drugstore. One of them complained of a pain in his arm and asked the drug clerk what to do for it. The clerk suggested that he use a liniment and handed him a small bottle.

"I never believed much in a liniment," said the customer. "I always thought the only good a liniment did was to get you to massage the spot and maybe stir up the circulation a bit."

"Oh, it does more than that," said the clerk. "It brings the white blood cells to the injured part. You probably know that the white blood corpuscles are the ones that have the power of healing. That's why a liniment does good."

The customer was impressed with this argument. "Well," he said, "it won't cost much to try it out." He took a bottle of the liniment and departed.

After he was gone, one of the men who had been listening to the whole conversation said to the clerk, "I did not want to do anything to spoil your sale, but honestly, now, wasn't all that talk about white blood corpuscles just a lot of sales talk? My father always claimed a liniment was just an expensive way of rubbing yourself."

"Oh, no!" the clerk assured him. "That was absolutely true. Here comes Dr. Johnson. Ask him if what I said isn't true."

Dr. Johnson was appealed to. "Yes, a liniment has a certain therapeutic value," he said. "Aside from the beneficial effect on the epithelium there may be some indirect effect on the leucocytes and perhaps the macrophages of the blood. Under proper medical supervision the use of a liniment may be of pronounced value."

The man who had questioned the clerk's statements was impressed by the doctor's opinion. "I never knew that doctors recommend a liniment," he said. "The next time I have a sprain, I'll have to try some."

Presently the doctor left the store. A third customer had been listening to all of the discussion of the values of liniment. With the doctor gone, he said: "Maybe you fellows are taken in by all those big words, but in my opinion Doc Johnson is nothing but an old blow-hard. He's nothing but a horse doctor, anyway. I've tried all kinds of liniments, and they never did me any good. You know perfectly well that liniment can't get through the skin; and if it can't get through the skin, how is it going to do any good?" He departed, unconvinced.

Deliberation.

This illustrates three levels of deliberation and three stages of proof. For the first customer the clerk's argument was sufficient. Probably he wanted to believe. He was actually suffering, and his mental state made him receptive to anything that promised relief. When the customer has a strong want, it is usually easy to influence him.

The second customer was not under the influence of immediate need, and it took more to convince him. The clerk's evidence was not enough to counterbalance his already existing beliefs, based mostly upon what his father had told him. The doctor's testimony, however, carried more weight with him, and he was finally won over.

The third customer was harder to influence. His own background of belief, based upon personal experience, was all against liniments. He had little respect for the "horse doctor," so that line of evidence failed to move him.

We should not think, however, that even the hardened customer could not be made to believe in the efficacy of liniment—at least of some new and scientific product. There are salesmen who claim that any man may be led to believe anything if the right method of approach is used. Certainly the exploits of the confidence men who continue to sell the Brooklyn Bridge, money machines, gold bricks, perpetual-motion machines—to mention only a few examples—would lead us to conclude that nothing is too fantastic for the human mind to accept as true, provided only it is presented in a convincing fashion.

What the Customer Does When He Deliberates.

When the customer deliberates, he mentally reviews the force of opposing beliefs. On the one hand, he has his background ideas; on the other, he has the antagonistic ideas presented by the salesman. If the new ideas are absolutely opposed to all that he believes, the state of deliberation does not last long; he simply dismisses the salesman's argument as impossible.

It usually happens, however, that the customer believes some things that fit in with the salesman's arguments and some things that do not. His problem then is to weigh the two sets of ideas and decide which seems most "true." As a matter of fact, abstract truth plays little part in the final decision. Emotion and wish usually hold the balance and cast the deciding vote.

Scott[1] in a widely quoted discussion of this process of deliberation lists five methods of reaching a decision, as follows:

[1] SCOTT, WALTER D., "Influencing Men in Business," The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1921.

1. *The Method of Logical Reasoning.*—This is methodical listing of reasons *pro* and *con* and a dispassionate consideration of their force, followed by a logical decision, without effort.

2. *The Method of Reason Followed by Voluntary Decision.*—The evidence seems to be equally favorable to each conclusion. The decision is made by an effort of will.

3. *The Method of Reason Followed by Emotional Decision.*—Here the weighing of values is interrupted by a sudden rush of dominating emotions that decides the issue.

4. *The Method of Reason Followed by Suggestion.*—At the critical moment of weighing the evidence, some external situation catches the attention and tips the scales in favor of one decision.

5. *The Method of Suggestion.*—Here there is no deliberation—what we have called "passive acceptance."

The first four of these methods involve deliberation. It should be noted that they differ chiefly in the mode of transfer from the state of deliberation to the act of decision. In the first case the mind passes without effort to the decision. In the second case an act of will occurs. In the third case the emotions set off the decision. In the fourth case an external stimulus brings deliberation to an end.

Securing Conviction: Proof.

In his work of convincing the prospect who deliberates, the salesman has four tools. These are:

Proof.
Evidence.
Arguments.
Claims.

In general they vary in effectiveness in the order given; proof is most likely to produce conviction, whereas mere claims are far less effective.

The salesman may employ several forms of proof. At the top of the list is the *demonstration.* Because the

customer is most likely to accept what he experiences for himself, the demonstration carries great weight. If the product has qualities that can be directly shown, the sale should usually be built around this central theme. If possible, let the customer make the demonstration himself. Thus the automobile salesman has the customer drive the car.

Closely related to the demonstration is the *test*, which brings out some special quality of the product. The test may be made in the customer's presence, or it may be made by a reputable test organization and the sworn results presented in proof. Thus the manufacturer of a building material may have his product tested by the engineering testing laboratory in a near-by university.

Another similar type of proof is by means of the *sample*. For many products, such as toothpaste, washing powders, or paints, this method is very effective in carrying conviction, provided the product is really good.

Lastly, there is proof by *testimony* and *testimonial*. This type of appeal has always been recognized as very strong. If some well-known and respected person declares without solicitation or hope of reward that the product is good and satisfactory in every way, the average man is usually much impressed.

Conviction by Means of Evidence.

Sometimes it is not possible to give absolute proof of the performance or quality of the product, but evidence may be presented that will favor conviction. Such evidence takes the form of *facts*. The salesman encourages conviction by presenting these facts.

For example, facts about the *construction* of the product may be convincing. The tire salesman shows a cross-section of his tire, pointing out certain factors in construction that indicate strength and durability.

Facts about the *process of manufacture* may be useful. Some salesmen carry pictures, specimens of materials,

and the like to show that the product is turned out under the most rigid conditions, ensuring quality.

Facts about the *manufacturer's organization* may be significant. Length of time in business, number of customers, financial rating, reputation may all have weight. If these factors are impressive, the manufacturer's *guarantee* may be regarded as convincing evidence of quality.

It is thus evident that the salesman who is fully equipped with these and other important facts about the firm and the product is better able to present the product in an effective way.

Arguments and Conviction.

Many people think that the most important tool in the salesman's bag of tricks is his supply of clever arguments. This idea is somewhat misleading. The word argument is confused with proof and evidence and persuasion. When it is restricted, as it should be, to mean attempts to convince the customer by a show of logic, it is seen to be of less importance than is popularly supposed.

Argument is also confused with controversy. Many salesmen think that when they are told to present sound arguments, they are to try to force the customer to accept a conviction that he resists. Nothing could be more useless. "A man convinced against his will remains of the same opinion still." The salesman should remember that the object of an argument is not to smash the other man's arguments but to lead him to believe. *Avoid all appearance of controversy in presenting arguments.*

Arguments as presented in the sale usually involve a general statement that is assumed to be accepted and from which the salesman infers a logical conclusion favorable to his product. Thus a salesman may argue:

A big company cannot afford to put out second-rate goods. Ours is a big company with a valuable reputation to maintain. Therefore you may be sure that our goods are of the highest quality.

It is very important that the general proposition assumed by the salesman as the starting point of his argument be one that is recognized as true by the prospect. A good rule, then, is to *base the argument on something with which the customer can agree.* As examples:

You will agree, I am sure, that the best test of the success of a course is the record of its students. Many of our former students are now writing for publication. You are as talented as many of them. With the help of the course you, too, could write stories and articles.

. . .

Everyone knows that if your golf clubs are not the right length and weight for your height and build, your game is bound to suffer. Our clubs are carefully adapted to your physical needs. Therefore you can expect to get better results from them.

. . .

You know the saying, "Nothing rolls like a ball." Our shafts are all mounted on ball bearings. That gives maximum smoothness in operation.

A second important rule in presenting arguments is to *avoid any conclusion that conflicts sharply with the customer's experience,* even though logic and truth may be on your side. For example, to argue that because the flakes of starch coat the skin with a smooth, soft powder, the use of starch in the bath is desirable will not convince many people. It may be a true statement; but since people have the illogical idea that starched things are stiff and uncomfortable, the idea of taking a bath in starch water is distasteful to them. The argument runs against a strong counter belief. In such cases it is very hard to bring conviction by arguments alone.

Claims and Assertions.

If customers were strictly logical in their thinking, there would be little place in selling for unsupported claims and assertions. It happens, however, that suggestion plays

a large part in inducing belief, and for that reason a positive statement made without any show of evidence or proof may sometimes carry as much conviction as an elaborate demonstration.

Fundamental to such belief is the *prestige* of the person making the assertion. If the customer feels that the salesman is an expert or regards him as trustworthy or has a high opinion of the house or company, then any sensible claim will be accepted without question. If, on the other hand, the customer does not have full confidence in the salesman, unsupported statements are likely to be challenged. As we remarked in an earlier paragraph, the customer believes what he wants to believe.

In any case it is well not to claim too much. Anything that sounds like exaggeration tends to invite doubts. Some salesmen find it advisable habitually to understate the good qualities of their wares. The salesman who recklessly fills his sales talk with such words as "finest," "largest," "best on earth," "safest," "unsurpassed," and the like usually is less convincing than the quiet man who uses the less obvious approach to the customer's belief.

Sincerity also plays a part. If the salesman is himself profoundly convinced of the truth of what he says, his earnestness of manner will tend to influence the customer, regardless of the validity of the ideas advanced. Herein is the secret of the success of many able salesmen—they believe so strongly that what they say is true that others accept uncritically their way of thinking, influenced more by the force of their suggestion than by the power of their arguments.

The Logic-tight Compartment.

In speaking of people who are not responsive to ordinary appeals to reason, the psychologists have coined the expressive phrase *logic-tight compartment.* This means that the customer has a set of ideas that are inconsistent but to which he clings in spite of all efforts to overthrow his

prejudice. He is like the philosophers who worked out the principles of astronomy and were able to predict an eclipse of the sun but persisted in their belief that the eclipse was caused by a giant dragon.

Argument does little good in such cases. It may even do harm. Once an individual has set himself to defend an idea, his pride will not allow him to admit that he is wrong. The salesman should resist the temptation to try to batter down this idea that looks so easy to overcome with logic. The attack from the front rarely succeeds. Rather seek to find another whim or prejudice or pet idea of the customer's that favors the point of view to be presented.

For example, a banker tells of a man who had the fixed idea that he did not need a trust company to take care of his estate. He resisted the ordinary logical arguments. The banker found out, however, that this man had a prejudice against churches and he was afraid that his wife might give some of his hard-earned money to the church after his death. Once he got the idea that a trust fund would prevent this, there was no longer any need to try to batter down his resistance. His prejudice against churches more than counterbalanced his prejudice against trust funds.

Rationalization.

In connection with reasoning we must mention a mental performance that looks like reasoning but has much of the characteristics of the logic-tight compartment. This is called *rationalization*, which means acting on the basis of wish or habit and explaining the act in logical, reasonable terms. Thus a customer may buy an automobile to gratify his pride but explains his act by saying that his wife's health has been bad and it is necessary to get her out of doors more. A girl may buy chewing gum because she likes the flavor, but she tells herself that she wants it because it whitens the teeth and aids digestion.

All of us use such rationalizations, of course. We offer them in the form of excuses and alibis to explain our failures, our weakness, and our mistakes. We are especially likely to discover some good "reason" when what we want to do clashes with what we ought to do. Sometimes the rationalization is used to deceive others; sometimes we even deceive ourselves.

Some salesmen apparently cannot learn that it does no good to try to expose a rationalization. When the customer claims that he does not have the money to buy insurance, it is an easy matter to try to shame him by pointing out how much he spends on amusements. But few customers fall in with this argument and meekly admit that they would do better to take a big policy and stop smoking so many cigars. Rather they tend to be irritated at the thought of giving up something that they find pleasant. Frequently they transfer the irritation to the salesman who made the unpleasant suggestion. The customer wants to preserve his rationalizations.

Rationalizations can be used in selling, however. The simple rule to remember is that no matter what the real reason for buying a product, it is well to *supply the customer with a socially acceptable reason as well.* Thus the chewing-gum manufacturers talk about the flavor—but they also speak of whitened teeth and improved digestion.

Preparing a Convincing Sales Talk.

In the light of the discussion presented in the preceding pages it is evident that the saleman who wishes to make his talk convincing should form the habit of thinking: *What things does my customer need to believe before he can buy confidently? What is the most direct method of establishing these beliefs?*

As an illustration, take the case of a salesman selling used automobiles for a high-class organization. Here is his analysis of his sales problem:

The first thing that I have to do is to find the car that they want and show it to them, show how good looking it is, let them look at it until they begin to want it. Then comes the one question that they all ask. The one thing that they all want to know is: How many miles has this car been driven?

That introduces the big problem that is in the minds of all of our customers. They have to be convinced that the car is as good as it looks. No matter how much they want it because of its good looks, that lurking doubt as to performance must be settled. The sale frequently hinges on the way in which we answer that question as to mileage.

We used to employ an answer that we now realize was weak. We would look at the speedometer and say, "Why this car has only been driven 15,000 miles"—or whatever the figure was. Usually the customer would not say much to that, but the chances were he did not believe us. He was thinking to himself that it was a pretty simple matter to change the speedometer, and he remained mentally about where he had been before the answer—unconvinced.

Now we use a better method: When he asks about the mileage on the car, we say: "I can't tell off-hand how far this car has been driven. When we recondition a car, we set the speedometer back to zero. You know as well as I do that the number of miles driven is not a very good index of a car's condition. The important thing from your angle is the present condition of the car. This automobile has been gone over thoroughly by our expert servicemen and has our unqualified guarantee that it is mechanically in perfect condition. We back that up with the same guarantee that we give on a new car. If you decide that you want this car, I will look up the records in the office and tell you the speedometer reading when we took it in. My own guess is that it has been driven about 15,000 miles. But the important thing is its present condition, and you can rest assured that it is now mechanically perfect."

Every words of that sales talk is true; and because we can say it with sincerity, it carries conviction. We find that it helps our customers overcome that state of doubt and fear that is holding them back.

This salesman has discovered the foregoing improved sales talk by thinking from the customer's point of view and by devising a way of harmonizing with that point of view. His experience is worthy of careful analysis, for it illustrates the right approach to the problem of inducing conviction.

The following additional examples illustrate other phases of this same method.

ILLUSTRATION 1

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A woman was buying a football for her young son. The clerk showed her one priced at $2.98 and another priced at $3.96. She was undecided which to buy. She was inclined to buy the more expensive article but, since she did not know much about footballs, wanted to have her judgment supported by more evidence. She said: "Is the $3.96 one really better?"

POOR SALES TALK

"Oh, yes, that is what we call our 'Junior Pro.' football. It's a very good ball."

BETTER SALES TALK

"Yes, it is well worth the extra price. As you can see for yourself it is made of better leather. The bladder is made of better rubber. It is a ball that every boy is proud to own."

ILLUSTRATION 2

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A man was accustomed to buying his suits ready made from a certain store. He had been looking over their stock, was not satisfied with anything that he saw, and was about to go out. The salesman suggested that he have the store tailor make him a suit to measure. He showed samples of cloth that were satisfactory, but the customer refused to buy, saying that he was afraid that he would not like the suit when it was made up.

POOR SALES TALK

"You do not need to worry about the suit. We have a very good tailor, and you are sure to be satisfied."

BETTER SALES TALK

"Mr. Customer, if you do not like that suit when it is made up, we would not think of letting you take it. We can put it right in stock and sell it as a ready-made to someone else. If you do not like the suit when it is made up, you are under no obligation."

ILLUSTRATION 3

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A woman was looking at an electric refrigerator, which she wanted very much, mostly because her friends had purchased similar machines. The price, however, "seemed like a lot of money" to her. She hesitated, not because

POOR SALES TALK

"Madam, you will not find any good mechanical refrigerator selling for less money."

BETTER SALES TALK

"Yes, it is a good deal of money if you think of it just as an

she did not want the refrigerator, but because she did not feel justified in buying it. She was not accustomed to spending large sums of money, and she felt the need of very careful consideration. She kept complaining that it seemed like a lot of money to spend on a household appliance.

expenditure, with no return. As a matter of fact, the sensible way to think of it is as an investment. It will cost you about fifty cents a week to run this machine. You are probably spending $1.50 to $1.75 a week for ice. So this machine will save about $1 a week."

ILLUSTRATION 4

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A man was looking at toy electric trains. He suddenly realized that some of them were for direct current and some were for alternating current. He was not sure which kind of current was supplied in his home and had about concluded to defer his purchase until he had an opportunity to secure that necessary information. He mentioned his difficulty to the clerk.

POOR SALES TALK

"Oh, you need not worry about that. If you get the wrong kind, you can always return it."

BETTER SALES TALK

"This chart shows that most of the houses in your district are supplied with alternating current. I think you will be safe in taking an A.C. set. If it should not be what you want, you can return it."

ILLUSTRATION 5

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A prospective tenant was looking at an apartment on the top floor of a building. He was entirely satisfied with the arrangement of the rooms, the outlook, and the rent and was about to say that he would sign the lease, when he learned that on the roof, directly above the apartment, was a playground for the children of the tenants. This made him hesitate, for he was afraid that the noise overhead would be disturbing.

POOR SALES TALK

"You can't expect to get away from every little noise in the city—not for the rent that we are asking on this apartment."

BETTER SALES TALK

"Tenants living on the top floor tell me that they seldom notice any noise from above. You see, the roof was especially constructed with soundproof material to deaden the sound. Some children are playing up there now, and I am sure that you have not noticed any unusual sound."

Summary and Conclusion.

Good selling convinces the customer that he is justified in spending money for a product by providing him with psychologically adequate reasons for buying. In bringing about such conviction the psychological factors are more important than the strictly logical. Arguments, proofs, evidence, and assertions should be presented in such a way as to fit into the existing background of beliefs the customer already possesses. They should be presented for the purpose of justifying the purchase rather than to overcome contrary ideas. In the preparation of arguments, the following points should be observed:

1. Avoid appearance of controversy.
2. Link arguments to accepted beliefs.
3. Link arguments to the customer's wants.
4. Be moderate in claims.
5. Give socially acceptable reasons for buying.
6. Be enthusiastic and sincere.
7. Make reasons definite, concrete.
8. Avoid questioning rationalizations.
9. Keep the customer's problem in mind.

The practice of these rules should be made habitual. The process may be hastened by the constant attempt to find and use more convincing ways of telling the sales story.

Questions and Exercises

1. What is meant by conviction?

2. Why do we say that the customer *needs* conviction?

3. What are the sources of the customer's background of beliefs?

4. List ten things that you believe about various products, such as automobiles or fountain pens. Trace these beliefs to their source.

5. Do you believe the clerk's statement that a liniment has a healing effect? Why?

6. What is the difference between proof and evidence?

7. What is the difference between convincing and persuading?

8. What methods would you use in trying to convince a man that a wrist watch is to be preferred to one of the pocket type?

Suggested Readings

BENNETT, CHARLES: "Scientific Salesmanship," Chap. XIV, American Efficiency Bureau, St. Louis, 1933.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE EIGHTH PRINCIPLE—REMOVING SALES OBSTACLES

The hardest problem in selling is not to make the customer want the goods. Neither is it to convince the customer that the goods are adequate. The hardest problem is to remove the obstacles that keep customers from buying.

This principle is so simple and so obvious that we need only state it in order to win agreement. Yet many salesmen, especially salesmen of the high-pressure school, cannot seem to grasp the idea. They think that when a customer does not buy, it is because he does not want to buy. They assume that the only way to overcome his refusal is to hammer away with arguments and appeals to purchase.

A salesman of the old type was applying for a position with a business-training organization. He presented letters, clippings, eloquent testimonials showing what a wonderful salesman and teacher of salesmen he was. He talked boastfully of his success in training great groups of students. For almost an hour he explained what a wonderful man he was. He ended by asking for a job as sales instructor, naming a rather small sum that he would expect as salary.

The manager of the training organization replied that there was no opening, since he already had two instructors who were covering the work.

The salesman pulled out more testimonials, gave more glowing descriptions of his own great successes, and ended by offering to work for even less than his first low offer.

Again the manager explained that the work was being taken care of by the present staff.

Once more the applicant delved into his brief case and brought out a tattered collection of clippings and letters, telling of his past successes. By this time the manager was tired of the steady stream of self-praise, which was apparently the only way that the salesman knew to meet a

refusal. Finally the manager had to terminate the interview rather abruptly.

"That chap had me almost convinced," he said later. "He probably does know how to handle a class, in spite of the fact that he does not know how to sell his own services. But I could not forgive his failure to show any real interest in our problem. His only thought was to tell how good he is or has been. What I want is for someone to come in here and tell me how I can get more work for our teachers to do. When I told him I could not take him into our organization because we already have two men on that kind of work, it was his cue to tell me that he could show me how to get enough additional training groups to make it worth while to employ him. That is the way to get a job. Make one!"

Analyzing Sales Barriers.

The trouble with this salesman was that he placed all his emphasis on selling. He forgot that most products and services are not sold. They are bought. But—and this is the vital point—they are bought after an obstacle to the purchase has been removed. Every sale that was ever made took place because a barrier to the purchase had been eliminated. Good selling persuades and convinces, but above all it finds out why customers cannot buy and then finds a way to remove the hindrance.

Let anyone who hesitates to accept these statements draw up two lists of recent purchases. In one column let him set down everything that has been sold to him against his wish in, let us say, the last three months. In the other column let him record the articles that he has purchased of his own will, because he wanted them.

A concrete illustration will help make clear the point. Let us look over a typical list drawn up by one businessman. His recent purchases are shown on the opposite page.

The first fact to note about this list is that the customer feels, as we all do, that relatively few purchases are the result of selling. Once in a while an aggressive salesman—in this particular case a book agent—may actually "sell" something. In ninety-nine purchases out of a hundred, however, the customer thinks that the sale is the result of his own desire to buy.

ONE MAN'S LIST OF RECENT PURCHASES

Things That I Feel Were "Sold" to Me	Things That I Bought because I Wanted Them
A set of books.	A roll of kodak film.
	Candy.
	Linoleum for the foyer.
	An electrically operated clock.
	Oranges and bananas.
	A detective story.
	Mercurochrome.
	Milk of magnesia wafers.
	A package of frozen meat.

There is a second and more important fact about the list of purchases just given. This fact does not appear on the surface, and the man who listed the articles probably did not realize it himself, but the truth is that he bought every article on the list after clever selling had removed some serious barrier to the sale.

Take the case of his purchase of the kodak film. He bought the film for his son who had asked for it. The boy, a young man now, has a kodak that was presented by Mr. Eastman to all children who were twelve years old in 1930. Before the boy owned a kodak, it was very hard to sell him films. Now that that barrier has been removed, there is a steady customer who buys of his own free will.

The literature on selling is full of illustrations of this principle. The Standard Oil Company is said to have given lamps to natives in India in order to make possible the sale of oil. Razor-blade manufacturers sell razors below cost in order to stimulate the sale of blades. It has been predicted that electricity will be supplied free, in order to encourage the purchase of electric apparatus—or that apparatus will be given away in order to increase the sale of electricity.

In connection with the removal of the barrier of prejudice, the purchase of the detective story affords a good

example. Twenty years ago a man in the position of this customer would not have thought of buying such "trash fiction." The selling methods of publishers have managed to remove this idea, so that today most men are not held back by this barrier.

The book, moreover, came to the purchaser through the mail, because of his membership in a book club. People may want books, but are too busy to take the time and trouble necessary to purchase them. Clever selling has overcome this difficulty just as a vending machine has made it possible for this man to buy his candy at the railway station on his way home, to buy frozen meat at the corner grocery, to operate his clock electrically, and to have semi-tropical fruits all the year around.

This man's purchase of mercurochrome and the magnesia wafers represents the overcoming of another kind of barrier. He simply had never heard of either of these products—so of course he did not buy them. An alert drug clerk called them to his attention and explained their good qualities. The sale followed. Much selling has to meet this barrier of ignorance.

It would be tedious to take up all the articles on this man's list of purchases. The examples that we have just given illustrate the point. The customer may not realize it; the salesman may not think much about it; but every sale represents a sales barrier overcome.

Overcoming Barriers in Personal Selling.

Most of the illustrations just given show the overcoming of a sales barrier by the manufacturer. The initiative came from the organization. This should not lead us to think that the individual salesman cannot overcome barriers. Perhaps the salesman cannot give away kodaks or establish a time-payment plan, but in his sphere he can by initiative and persistence surmount obstacles even more important than those which must be met by the organization.

For example, take the experience of one salesman whose story, with modifications, can be duplicated in every sales organization. This man called on hardware dealers. He found one dealer to whom he could not sell simply because this merchant had unfortunately loaded up with an overstock of a cheap article that would not move in that community. The dealer would not take on the more expensive line carried by the salesman as long as he had any of the old stock. To overcome this situation, the salesman hunted around until he found another dealer in a near-by town who could handle the cheap line. To him the salesman sold the surplus stock of the other merchant. The way was now open for the salesman's line, and he established a permanent customer.

Again and again we meet examples of this kind. Whenever salesmen get together and begin telling of difficult sales, an illustration of this principle is sure to appear. To find ways of taking stumbling blocks out of the customer's path is one of the most important duties of the successful salesman.

A List of Obstacles to the Sale.

There are, of course, literally dozens of things that may obstruct the sale. Probably no one has ever made a complete list of all these barriers. For our purpose such a complete list is not necessary. The following condensed list shows the principal barriers between the customer and the purchase of the goods and suggests the main points of attack for the saleman:

SALES BARRIERS

Physical Barriers	Mental Barriers
Lack of money.	Prejudice.
Inconvenience of purchase.	Ignorance.
Other obligations.	Fear.
	Inertia.
	Indecision.
	Self-satisfaction.

It will be noted that these obstacles fall into two groups. In one group we have what may be called the *physical* barriers—such things as lack of money, inconvenience or impossibility of purchase, or the presence of other duties and obligations that make purchasing difficult.

In the second group we have those which may be called *mental.* That is, they depend upon how the customer thinks or feels. Here the salesman's task is not so much to change a physical condition as to bring about a new attitude in the customer.

The salesman should memorize this list. He should have it clearly in mind, just as the skilled physician has constantly before him a list of the principal common diseases. You cannot hope to detect a disease or a sales obstacle if you do not know what you are looking for.

Lack of Money as a Barrier.

The most obvious reason why people do not buy is the simple and unescapable fact that they do not have the money. Only a few very wealthy people are able to satisfy every wish and whim. A majority of our population cannot buy much beyond the necessities of existence.

To overcome this difficulty there are three possible solutions. The first is to reduce prices, thus encouraging sales, leading to increased production.

A second method of increasing purchasing power is to extend credit to the customer, allowing him to pay for his purchase in installments. This has been widely practiced, especially by organizations trying to reach new levels of consumers with articles such as automobiles and furniture.[1]

Still a third method of giving the consumer more buying power is to increase his income by keeping wages regular and high. Most modern business leaders subscribe to this idea, in principle if not in practice.

[1] SELIGMAN, E. R. A., "The Economics of Instalment Selling," 2 vols., Harper & Brothers, New York, 1928.

A clear expression of these concepts is to be found in the writing of such men as Edward A. Filene. Mr. Filene once said:

> Unless we distribute buying power, it is futile to try to distribute goods, and the machinery which we have set up for the production and distribution of goods must slow down.
>
> There are two ways in which they distribute buying power, and each way, instead of constituting a handicap upon their business, proves to be essential to its success.
>
> One is by making prices as low as they can be made—not making them low merely because competition compels it, although even that is likely to be helpful, but making them low as Ford makes prices low, regardless of competition, so that more people will be able to buy more things.
>
> The other way is through making wages as high as they can be made. Not through generosity, but through enlightened selfishness; for high wages pay an employer in two distinct ways. In the first place, high wages make better organization and better management necessary, and they cause an employer to look to better methods and the elimination of waste for the greater profits which he very properly wants. In the second place, high wages create a higher buying power, which all progressive business must have.[1]

Of course, the individual salesman is but a cog in the machine, powerless to do much about the organization policies as to price and wages and credits. It is well, however, for him to have a clear appreciation of modern theories in these lines and to realize the importance of fostering the purchasing power of the consumer.

Making It Convenient for the Customer to Buy.

No matter what excuses the customer may give to himself or to the salesman, an important factor behind many lost sales is the fact that purchasing is inconvenient. Again consulting your own experience as a purchaser, how many times have you put off buying something "because it would be too much trouble"? It is too much trouble to have a suit made by the tailor; we buy one ready made. It is too much trouble to walk across the street for a certain

[1] *The New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1930.

brand of bread; we buy another brand and save a walk. It is too much trouble to make our own ice cream; we decide not to buy a new freezer. It is too much trouble to sharpen a lead pencil; we buy a metal pencil with an automatic feed. It is troublesome to bother with buttons; we buy clothing and bags with slide fasteners.

As a matter of fact, this resistance to the inconvenient becomes a positive state of mind, and we actively seek for that which is convenient. Frequently we spend more time seeking the convenience than the convenience saves us. We are like the pedestrian who risks his life dashing through traffic in crossing a street, only to waste ten minutes stopping to watch some men digging a foundation for a building. We are more in love with the idea of convenience than we are with the actual saving of time and effort.

The fact remains that, if you want to sell, you must make the customer feel that purchasing is easy. The following are important rules to observe:

1. Make the time of purchase convenient for the customer.
2. Make the place of purchase convenient.
3. Make the method of purchase convenient.
4. Make the size of purchase convenient.
5. Make the use of the product convenient.
6. Make the delivery of the product convenient.
7. Make the method of payment convenient.

Other Obligations as a Barrier to Purchasing.

Since the customer cannot buy everything, it follows that there has to be a process of selecting, of deciding that some things are of more pressing importance than others. Every customer has such a scale of values. At the top of his list he probably has such necessities as food and shelter and clothing. Lower in the list come the semi-necessities, then the luxuries, then the trivial purchases that he does not concern himself about one way or the other.

Every purchase is weighed against such a scale of values. The customer may not be clearly conscious of what he is

doing, but as he considers the positive satisfactions to be gained from the purchase—the advantages and the good points brought out by the persuasive salesman—he has at the same time in the back of his mind a negative idea. He is thinking of the things that he must give up in order to be able to buy the present article. He is trying to decide if it is worth the cost.

Customers rarely tell the salesman about this secret barrier. Once in a while a customer may remark that "I'm saving my money to buy a house" or "I think I would rather buy a car than to pay so much for rent." Ordinarily however, they keep such thoughts to themselves.

Writers on modern business have dramatized this situation by referring to it in terms of the so-called "new competition." By this we mean that today the manufacturer or the merchant is not only in competition with others in the same line but also with organizations selling entirely unrelated products. All are trying to get a share of the consumer's dollar. If the automobile manufacturers get an extra slice of this dollar, it is quite possible that another group—say, the book publishers—will get less, because the customer will have less money to spend and less time to devote to spending it.

Thus the idea of an alternative purchase becomes a barrier that the salesman must overcome. The only way to overcome it is to pile up additional values to be gained by making a decision favorable to the salesman's offering. Find out, if possible, what the competing want is, and try to show that from the customer's point of view this competing want is less important than the ones to be satisfied by the purchase under discussion.

Overcoming Prejudice.

Customers are full of prejudices. They think that they do not like a certain color, a certain design, a specific feature or part. They do not believe in certain established ideas or principles. They do believe in certain other

superstitious ideas. They are finicky, perverse, blind, and obstinate. In short, they are human.

These prejudices block many sales. Blond women have a prejudice against a dark shampoo; they think it will darken their hair. Some housewives have a prejudice against aluminum cooking utensils, having picked up the false idea that aluminum ware causes cancer. The popular prejudice against butter substitutes such as oleomargarine has never been overcome. A shoe manufacturer found a prejudice against a waterproof shoe for general wear. The manufacturers of wedding rings have been slowly overcoming the prejudice against anything but a plain gold band. Bobbed hair, long hair, short skirts, long skirts, high shoes, low shoes—almost every change of fashion is accomplished in the face of a strong prejudice. Almost every product has at some time or other to meet this serious psychological barrier.

It is the salesman's business to recognize these prejudices and to deal with them in a sympathetic way. Sometimes they are troublesome. Frequently they are exasperating. Often the salesman is tempted to be impatient, to tell the customer in plain language that his ideas are silly. Most salesmen, of course, know enough to resist this temptation. Some, however, cannot quite suppress the condescending smile, the bored expression, the impatient tone of voice. Customers do not overlook these little signs. Then they sense the salesman's antagonism, and their prejudice grows the stronger.

You cannot smash a prejudice. You cannot overcome it by sneers or jeers or pitying smiles. A prejudice is like an ingrowing nail. To cure it you must gently remove the cause.

Here are rules for dealing with prejudices. Not all can be applied in any one case, but they are all worth remembering:

1. Treat a prejudice with respect. Show the customer that you appreciate his point of view. Make him feel that you are sympathetic.

2. Do not try to overcome a prejudice by arguments. This merely puts the customer on the defensive.

3. After you have made it clear that you recognize the prejudice, ignore it as much as possible.

4. Suggest—tactfully and indirectly—that the prejudice is inconsistent with something else that the customer believes.

5. Present the proposition in such a way as to encourage reclassification.

Ignorance as an Obstacle in the Sale.

There are dozens of meritorious and desirable products that people never think of using, simply because they have never heard of them. For example, a dried plant, called Irish moss, is on sale at many drugstores. This plant makes a delicious dessert. Many people would like it if they only knew about it. But few people have ever heard of it. In the same way millions of people in the United States know nothing about tooth brushes, antiseptic lotions, flat collar buttons, and so on, through a long list. If this barrier of ignorance could be magically removed, the sale of most products would increase tremendously.

One of the primary functions of selling is to remedy this lack of knowledge. The good salesman is a teacher. He explains and informs and instructs.

Yet this giving of information must be handled carefully. It will not do to lecture the customer. It will not do to make him feel that he is ignorant and must be enlightened. The salesman should introduce his explanations with some such phrase as "perhaps you know" or "you probably have heard." He should be careful to leave the impression that the customer is not unusual or ignorant just because he has never heard about the product or some feature of it. He should impart information without seeming to do so.

The Customer's Fears.

Fear is one of the great inhibitors in the sale. All of us are afraid of many things. We are afraid of what

people will say. We are afraid of the opinions of our friends or our family. We fear loss and want. We fear disappointment. We fear injury.

A new face powder containing small quantities of radium failed to sell because women were afraid that the powder would burn their faces. People were afraid of the early steamboats, the first automobiles, and they are still afraid of the airplane. Many men are afraid to buy clothing for their wives because of the ridicule to which they may be subject if seen in the women's department in a store. After a crash in the stock market people are afraid to buy even sound securities. The merchant hesitates to invest his money in a new line of goods, afraid that he cannot dispose of them readily. The housewife refuses to buy the new vacuum cleaner that she wants, afraid that her husband will not approve of the purchase. An element of fear is present in almost every sale of any importance.

Fears are of two classes: the rational, understandable ones, such as our fear of high places, and the irrational or groundless ones, such as the abnormal fears some people have of cats or crossing bridges or of being in a closed room. Most of the fears encountered in selling are of the first kind.

Whether fears are reasonable or not, they usually do not yield to reason. You cannot influence human emotions by cold logic. The salesman, then, who is confronted with the task of removing a fear from the mind of the customer must remember that it is much like a prejudice and must be handled in the same way. Do not make fun of a fear. Give all the facts necessary to show it to be groundless. Rely mostly on suggestion. Thus a bank may stop a run by displaying great stacks of gold and bills, suggesting that there is plenty of money to pay all depositors. A merchant allays the fear that men have of being ridiculed for wearing a striking new style by suggesting that it is being worn by leaders of fashion. Other merchants

overcome fear of loss by offering a guarantee or a bond. There are many similar devices that may be adopted when it is found that the customer is afraid to buy.

Putting Off the Purchase. Indecision.

Inertia—just putting off action—results in the loss of many sales. The customer may really want the goods. He may intend to buy. He may have the money. He may be free of prejudice and fear that might hinder the sale. And then his habit of deferring things may step in, and he tells the salesman to "see me next month" or "come around later" or "some other time."

Sometimes the attempt to defer the purchase is due to this habit of avoiding present action if possible, and sometimes it represents an attempt to escape from the agony of indecision. Some people have trouble in making up their minds. First they think they will, and then they think they won't. They are like Buridan's ass, which starved to death between two stacks of hay, unable to decide which was the more desirable. People who are subject to this unpleasant mental state frequently try to escape by putting off the decision to a later date, hoping that in the meantime something will occur to make choice easier.

In the chapter on Suggestion and Action we shall have more to say about devices the salesman may use in encouraging immediate decision. For the present we shall merely lay down the following rules:

1. Recognize the put-off for what it is, a sign of weakness, laziness, or inability to decide.
2. Remember that there must have been some fairly strong motive for buying, else the customer would not have even considered a deferred decision. Find out what that motive was and appeal to it.
3. Warm up for the major decision by getting a decision on a minor point.

Satisfaction with Present Situation as a Barrier.

Some critics of the present economic situation are accustomed to complain that modern advertising and selling

tend to make the consumer dissatisfied with his lot. Defenders of the present system point out that this dissatisfaction leads him to extra exertions in order to secure the money wherewith to purchase the goods that he has been encouraged to want and that his scale of living is thus raised.

The salesman is not so much concerned with the right or wrong of these economic arguments as he is with the practical fact that when people are snug and satisfied with their present situation, this satisfaction presents a difficult barrier to overcome. Thousands of people are still satisfied with oil lamps or at least are not dissatisfied enough to change over to electricity. Merchants are satisfied with out-of-date windows and store furniture. Some housewives are still using the old-fashioned washboard. Factories are putting up with wasteful and out-of-date machinery. Office managers continue to drag along, hindered by inefficient systems and equipment. And wherever you find a situation of this kind, you find a closed market for some product. If we could merely supply the needs of all customers who ought to buy and are held back by their contentment with the old way and the old equipment, we would do a very profitable business in many lines.

Of course the only way to overcome this obstacle is to find the people who are operating under old and inefficient conditions and show them in a dramatic fashion the loss that they are incurring by the old way. Let a woman do her washing for a month with a washing machine, and her contentment with the old way will vanish. Demonstrate to a merchant how much more attractive his windows will be with improved light reflectors, and he will not willingly put up with his old equipment.

Here is one of the greatest contributions that the salesman makes to society. By making people dissatisfied, he leads them to better their way of life.

Diagnosing Barriers.

Lincoln is said to have remarked that in preparing to argue a case in court he found it advisable to spend one-fourth of his time in preparing his own side and three-fourths of his effort in studying his opponent's position. The same rule may well be applied in selling. Most salesmen should spend relatively less time in trying to find convincing arguments and powerful selling appeals, and relatively more time in the study and elimination of the obstructions that hinder the sale.

It is especially important that the salesman develop skill in diagnosing the obstructing thought in the customer's mind. The following cases illustrate the difference between good and bad selling talks in connection with this point.

ILLUSTRATION 1

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A man customarily purchased a certain type of shoe because it gave extra support to his arches, which had caused him some trouble. He asked for this particular model at the store from which he usually bought his shoes.

POOR SALES TALK

"That model is out of date now. Nobody is wearing them anymore. Why don't you look at something more modern."

BETTER SALES TALK

"I am sorry, but we do not stock that model now. I might be able to get it for you from the factory. If you are interested in it because of the special arch-support feature, we have a new shoe that is designed along the same lines. Just let me show you a pair."

ILLUSTRATION 2

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A man entered a radio store and asked to be shown an inexpensive set. He explained that he expected to move from his present

POOR SALES TALK

"No, mister, we don't handle any cheap sets. We are not in the junk business. I can, however, show you a dandy set for $110.

house in the course of eight or ten months and that in the district to which he expected to transfer a different kind of electric current was supplied, so that his electric equipment would be rendered useless. In the meantime he wanted a radio for entertainment but of course did not care to spend more than a few dollars on it. He suggested that he would be satisfied with a used set, if the radio store happened to have one on hand.

It has tone, volume, selectivity—everything you want in a radio, and the cabinet is a beauty. If you will just step this way, I will be glad to demonstrate what this wonderful set will do."

BETTER SALES TALK

"I am sorry that it is not our policy to handle used sets or the cheaper new sets. I gather from what you say that when you move to your new home, you expect to buy a better instrument. Why not get the better set now? We can arrange it so that when you move, you can turn in the chassis of your set and get one suited to the current in your new home. If you want to do that, the only expense to you will be the cost of the tubes. That way you will have the use of a first-class radio, and the cost will probably not be so great as the cost of a secondhand set."

ILLUSTRATION 3

THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM

A man was considering a life insurance policy. He was convinced that he needed more insurance, but because of other obligations he was not able to buy at the moment. He carefully explained his financial situation to the salesman, making it clear that he intended to buy and that he would buy that particular policy from that particular salesman as soon as he received certain payments that would be due in the next few

POOR SALES TALK

"The old story—come around later. I hear it every day. Did you ever stop to think that three months from now you may not be able to get insurance? Many a man has procrastinated until it was too late. If you really want this insurance as you say you do, you will find some way to get it."

BETTER SALES TALK

"All right, we are agreed that you want the insurance and ought to have it as soon as pos-

months. He was well known in the community as an honest and reliable man, with a good income.

sible. The only problem is the money, and you will have that in three months. I'll tell you what I can do. I sometimes take care of the payments for responsible customers. In fact I have a special fund at my bank that I use for that purpose. Let's get this insurance into force as soon as possible. I will take care of the payment for you, and you can pay me in three months when you get your money."

The chief characteristic of the better sales talk in all of these cases is that the salesman was intelligent in grasping the customer's problems and resourceful in finding a satisfactory solution. Herein lies a fundamental of successful selling. Every salesman should cultivate the habit of thinking: *What is keeping this customer from buying? What can I do to remove this obstruction?*

Excuses, Doubts, and Objections.

In diagnosing hindering factors in the sale the salesman is frequently guided by opposing ideas presented by the customer. These opposing ideas appear as *excuses*, *doubts*, and *objections*.

Excuses indicate that the customer's desire for the product has not been aroused. They are offered when the customer wishes to avoid talking to the salesman, to avoid a consideration of the proposal, to avoid a decision. The only way to overcome them is to find an element of the offering that will appeal to a real want or need.

Doubts occur when the salesman has failed to present his ideas in such a light as to make possible conviction. The only answer is to present more evidence, more impressive proof, or more effective arguments.

Objections indicate that the customer wants the product but is conscious of some obstacle that prevents purchase.

Sometimes objections are silent; sometimes they are expressed. The salesman should anticipate objections if possible and remove the reason for them or show it to be of little importance. For the customer to express an objection is likely to give it additional importance in his mind, so that it is usually a good plan to meet objections before they arise. Once an objection has been expressed, however, it should be carefully attended to and every effort made to deal with it satisfactorily.

Writers on the art of salesmanship usually enumerate four methods of dealing with objections as follows:

1. Proving objections unsound or not true.
2. Accepting them with a reservation. Sometimes called the "yes—but" method. The salesman agrees but shows that other factors counterbalance the objection.
3. Using the objection as a reason for buying. Sometimes called the direct-return or the boomerang method. Some salesmen are trained to meet any objection with the statement: "That is the very reason why you should buy."
4. Passing over the objection.

Many salesmen make for themselves or secure from their organization a list of the principal objections to their proposition and a carefully prepared set of replies. Books have been written on this subject.[1] These are all very useful, and every salesman should apply them in his own selling. Remember, however, that the answer to an objection should not be merely a clever twist of argument. The object is not to overcome the customer but to overcome the hindering idea. Make a real study of the customer's problem and an honest attempt to help solve that problem. Any other way of meeting objections is almost sure to arouse resistance.

Summary and Conclusion.

Salesmen frequently overestimate the necessity of creating desire in the customer. They think that they have to

[1] For example, that by Giles, "500 Answers to Sales Objections," published by The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1924.

plead and argue. They should spend less time in trying to overcome the customer and more time in trying to overcome the obstacles that keep him from buying. These barriers may be physical or mental, real or imaginary. The salesman's task is, first, to discover them by sympathetic attention to the customer's problem; second, to remove them if possible.

Rules for dealing with obstacles in the sale follow:

1. Make it easy to buy.
2. Make it convenient to buy.
3. Make it possible for the customer to buy.
4. Show fears to be groundless.
5. Eliminate prejudices by inducing reclassification.
6. Give information to overcome the barrier of ignorance.
7. Overcome indecision by giving buying reasons and motives and by showing advantages of decision.
8. Overcome other obligations by showing that the proposition should have first consideration.
9. Concentrate on the customer's problem and try to solve it.

Questions and Exercises

1. From your own experience give an illustration of a salesman who failed to sell because he did nothing to remove the obstacle to the purchase.

2. Make a list of recent purchases, and indicate the obstacle that was removed in each case.

3. Make a list of purchases that you would like to make, and indicate the obstacles that have hindered you to date.

4. From your own experience give an illustration of a saleman who succeeded in making a sale because he found a way to help the customer overcome an obstacle to purchase.

5. Suppose that you were selling life insurance to a man who claimed that for religious reasons he felt that it was wrong to gamble on the duration of human life as insurance companies must do. How would you handle this objection?

6. Suppose that you were selling a vacuum cleaner to a housewife and met this excuse: "My husband might not approve if I bought this without his consent." How would you meet this situation?

7. What are the four common ways of dealing with objections?

Suggested Readings

BENNETT, CHARLES: "Scientific Salesmanship," Chap. XXIII, American Efficiency Bureau, St. Louis, 1933.

CANFIELD, BERTRAND R.: "Salesmanship: Practices and Problems," Chap. XVIII, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1940.

FERNALD, C. H.: "Salesmanship," Chap. XIII, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1935.

GILES, RAY: "500 Answers to Sales Objections," The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1924.

RUSSELL, FREDERIC A., and FRANK HERMAN BEACH: "Textbook of Salesmanship," 3d ed., Chaps. XIV, XV, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1941.

STEVENSON, JOHN ALFORD: "Meeting Objections," Harper & Brothers, New York, 1921.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NINTH PRINCIPLE—INDUCING DECISION AND ACTION

The chief business of the salesman is to get people to act. All his other duties and efforts are but incidental to this main task. This is the climax of the play. It is the final test of sales ability.

To induce decision and action the salesman has two principal methods—*suggestion* and *persuasion.* Persuasion is the direct method, appealing by words to the customer's strong motives. Suggestion, less direct, appeals to other behavior patterns such as habits and associations. These two sales tools deserve the most careful analysis. We want to learn to understand them and to know how to use them successfully.

Suggestion. Type One: To Produce External Action.

Of the two methods, suggestion is the more difficult to understand. Perhaps this is because people have frequently connected suggestion with mystery and trickery. It is thought of as a kind of black magic. Sometimes its use is not considered quite ethical.

It will be well to free our minds at once of these superstitious ideas and to see suggestion as a plain, serviceable fact of everyday human experience. The best way to get a practical idea of the use of suggestion is to consider specific cases. For convenience they may be classified into four types, depending upon the object of the suggestion.

The first of these types includes suggestions used to induce external, visible reactions. A good illustration is to be found in the following procedure which a manufacturer of a well-known food product outlines for his demonstrators.

After ringing the doorbell the demonstrator should remove his hat and place it on the brief case beside the door and out of sight. Have the mounted copy of the free offer in your right hand. When the door opens, step back—not forward—and slowly bring the card up to the level of your eyes, holding it so the housewife can see it. Then say: "Good morning. I believe you have received a card like this, telling you about the free package of ———— we are giving away, have you not?" As you say this, look at the card, then at her.

The object of this procedure is to get the housewife to focus her attention upon the card and the free offer. As long as she is thinking about this free offer, she will not be able to think about refusing to give you an interview.

As soon as you see that she is looking at the card, hand it to her. Do not ask her to take the card. Simply hold it out to her, and assume that she will take it. Then reach down to your brief case, take out the sample package and the pencil that you should carry there. Hold the pencil in one hand, the package in the other, and proceed with the demonstration talk. Because your hands are occupied, she cannot very well hand the card back to you—at least she will feel that she cannot—and as long as she has your card, she cannot very easily end the interview until you have finished your talk.

Analysis of Suggestions of Type One.

If we analyze this approach, we discover that the demonstrator led the housewife to make at least four reactions, without asking her to do so. First, by holding up the card and by looking at it himself he induced her to fix her gaze upon it. This is a simple, yet widely used form of suggestion. The actor uses it when he looks intently at a door to suggest that someone is about to enter. The magician uses it when he looks and points at some innocent object, thus directing the attention of the audience while his assistant quietly prepares the stage for the next trick. The practical joker employs it when he stands at a street corner gaping upward at the sky until he has a crowd of people straining their necks to see what he sees. Every salesman uses it when he points with a pencil or looks at something that he wishes the customer to look at.

The demonstrator's second use of suggestion was to get the housewife to nod her head and agree that she had

received a copy of the free offer card. He secured this reaction by saying, "You have received it, haven't you?" and by looking at her expectantly. It is an interesting fact that by the use of this device it is possible to get people to agree to almost any fairly reasonable proposition. Provided the customer is in a tractable mood, a question, such as "Isn't that true, Mrs Jones?" or "Don't you think so, Mr. Smith?" is pretty sure to win a nod or some other expression of agreement.

The third use of suggestion in the demonstration was in getting the housewife to take the free offer card. Note that the card was simply held out to her without a word, the demonstrator assuming that she would take it. Boys passing out handbills on the street use the same device. Salesmen may employ it in getting the customer to look at the goods.

The fourth suggestion in the demonstration was more complicated. By his maneuver the demonstrator managed to get both hands occupied and thus suggested that he could not take the card back and that the housewife must stand and hold it until he finished. His suggestion here resulted in a continued action rather than a single act. A somewhat similar case is reported by a large department store. This store has a strip of red carpet extending from the elevator doors to a display of evening gowns. Women getting off the elevator walk right down that carpet, as if walking a gangplank, straight to the exhibit. The strip of carpet suggests their course far better than any sign.

The Second Type of Suggestion: Internal Reactions.

We have just seen that suggestions of the first type result in external reactions such as looking, holding out the hand, walking in a desired direction. We now take up a second type, those suggestions that induce internal reactions not visible to the salesman but which he may confidently expect to occur.

A very simple example of these internal reactions is the salivary reflex. To experience its action, resolve not to swallow for five minutes. In the meantime imagine that you are in a grocery store and a salesman is talking about the superior quality of some lemons. He cuts one of the lemons in two and invites you to taste the juice. As vividly as possible imagine that you are sucking the lemon.

For most people this mental image is sufficient to start a generous flow of saliva. In exactly the same way the suggestion of food may start a flow of gastric and intestinal secretions. Other suggestions may act to slow down or stop these juices, as when we are afraid or disgusted by something unclean. Suggestion may cause the heart to beat faster or slower. It may alter the rate of respiration. Satow[1] reports that at the time of the outbreak of cholera in Hamburg, many people died of diarrhea as a result of their dread of cholera. Faith healers, on the other hand, use suggestion to alter organic states and produce in their patients at least the illusion of cure. As an illustration, Satow cites a certain elixir that was very successful in curing the maladies of the court ladies in the time of Napoleon III. The medical prescription for it was:

Aqua caelestis	68.0
Eadem repetita	17.0
Aqua destillata	5.0
Nil aliud	9.4
Iteram ejusdem	0.6

When this impressive formula is translated into English, it reads as follows:

Pure rain water	68.0
The same	17.0
Distilled water	5.0
Nothing else	9.4
As above	0.6

This remedy, strange as it may seem, proved very effective. Just as the idea of the lemon makes our mouths

[1] SATOW, LOUIS, "Hypnotism and Suggestion," p. 14, translated by Miall, Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., New York, 1923.

water, so the idea of an invigorating, healthful drink produced corresponding internal adjustments.

As far as the salesman is concerned, this second type of suggestion is the least important of the four that we shall discuss. Perhaps salesmen selling food products or medicines might take advantage of it. For the rest of us a knowledge of this phase of human nature is chiefly important as it serves to round out the complete picture of the customer's reaction patterns.

Type Three: The Use of Suggestion to Intensify a Sensation.

If you will let your mind dwell on the fact for a moment, you will probably discover that you are in need of a good deep breath of fresh air. Repress your tendency to follow the suggestion just given, and continue to breathe slow, shallow, unsatisfactory breaths. Note how constricted your chest feels, how your throat feels tight and dry. The more you think about it the more you realize that if you do not have a good deep breath pretty soon, you will suffocate.

We are all familiar with this type of suggestion, in one form or another. We know that suggestion may make common foods take on a superior taste and that negative suggestion may spoil the effect of the most delicious dinner. If someone suggests that we are looking ill, we straightway begin to experience a dozen symptoms. If someone suggests that a hat is not becoming to us, we discover that it has unsuspected defects. Almost any sensation can be intensified by suggestion.

An illustration of the use of this form of suggestion in selling is given by Watson. A tea salesman was demonstrating his product to a grocer. He had a little outfit that he set up on the counter. He made a great show of preparation for his test of the tea.

When he was ready for the demonstration, he would say, "There—that's just to give you a taste of *real* tea. But you couldn't sell a pound

a month, probably, except to yourself. One dollar and sixty cents a pound is too high."

The grocer tastes, following the expert's suggestion about not swallowing it, and after all this anticipation could scarcely fail to enjoy the taste. That gave the salesman a chance to very delicately flatter his taste again and then draw him on to tasting other samples.[1]

A shoe salesman uses the same method. "Isn't that comfortable?" he exclaims when he places a special last on the customer's foot. The customer suddenly realizes that the shoe *is* comfortable. In the same way a clothing salesman emphasizes fit of the garment. A real estate salesman talks so convincingly about the cool summer breezes that blow across his property that the customer feels them—even in his office. A man who sells travel trips can almost make one perceive the languorous scents wafted by light breezes over moonlit sea from the tropical island where natives croon their soft songs of love and romance. That is suggestion.

The Fourth Type of Suggestion: Suggesting Convictions.

The fourth use of suggestion is to convey an idea that is accepted by the prospect without deliberation or debate. The object of this type of suggestion is to produce conviction with the least possible resistance.

For example, a jewelry salesman wishes to convey the idea that his goods are of superior quality. It would be difficult and tedious to impress this idea by arguments. He accomplishes his purpose much more easily by suggestion. He has an expensive-looking velvet pad which he uses as a background. He places this pad carefully upon the showcase. Then he gently places his jewelry upon this background. By his manner and by this stage setting he effectively impresses the customer with the idea of the superiority of the goods, without one word of argument.

[1] WATSON, "Knack of Selling," Vol. I, p. 26, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1913. See also Bigelow, "The Knack of Selling More," McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1936.

This method, with variations, is widely employed in selling. Almost every business and most salesmen make use of it in some form. Banks have impressive iron bars on their windows to create the idea of stability. Doctors have impressive offices, with an awesome display of instruments and diplomas. Bakeries arrange their salesrooms to suggest cleanliness. Clothiers suggest exclusiveness. Furniture dealers try to suggest comfort and quiet; one dealer has a large cat that makes itself at home among the pieces on display and thus gives a suggestive touch. Automobile dealers have luxurious salesrooms to enhance the luxury of the car. They also avoid negative suggestions, and it is said that Ford gave orders that all display rooms should be separated from repair shops and that no spare parts or skid chains should be sold where the prospective customer might see them and thus get the impression that Fords wear out and break down.

Salesmen convey suggestions by their dress, their manner, and their words. A shoe salesman suggests that he is giving the customer a very careful fit by the way in which he places the foot on the footrest, runs his fingers over the instep, measures the width and length, notes the shape of the toes. A college boy selling magazines, house to house, found that it helped his sales if he acted a bit diffident and nervous, suggesting that he was not the usual hard-to-get-rid-of canvasser. A man selling securities has found that it pays to dress in such a way as to convey the idea of prosperity; customers are much more likely to accept his arguments as to the desirability of his offering.

Suggesting Sales Ideas by Words.

Words are, of course, the most potent tool for suggesting ideas. "You will probably need some shaving cream, too," says the salesman who has just sold razor blades. "An extra pair of trousers goes with this suit if you wish," suggests the clothing salesman. "We do not have to sell people the desire for insurance any more," says an insurance

man. "There is an old man coming to see you," hints a salesman selling the idea of thrifty investments for old age.

The aim of these suggestive phrases is to introduce an idea into the customer's mind with the least possible resistance. In fact suggestion is sometimes defined as the technique of securing uncritical acceptance, unreflective action. Obviously if this can be accomplished, it means a great saving of time and effort for the salesman. Verbal suggestion is quite rightly regarded as one of the most important tools in selling.

Studying the Technique of Suggestion.

The thoughtful salesman will be interested in getting the broadest possible conception of the practical use of suggestion. He will study its application in every field. To find examples he has only to look around. Everyone uses this device. Lawyers are skilled in suggestion, and the courts afford interesting cases. Preachers use verbal suggestions effectively, especially preachers of the evangelistic type. The stage provides an excellent source of material on this subject. Doctors employ suggestion in treating their patients. Teachers impress their points by this method. Parents find it more dependable than commands and punishment. Everywhere are examples of suggestion to be discovered by the observant student.

The advertising writers are especially clever in the use of suggestion, and the salesman will find it helpful to study their methods. Here, for example, are some well-known selling phrases from advertisements and the suggestions that they convey:

QUALITY SUGGESTED BY INFERENCE:

Selling Phrase	*Suggestion Conveyed*
"You Just Know She Wears Them"	The product must be good, for the best people buy it.
"More than a Million Users"	The product must be good, for it is so popular.
"They May Look Alike—but . . ."	They are not alike, and this product is superior.

QUALITY SUGGESTED BY COMPARISON:

Selling Phrase	*Suggestion Conveyed*
"Built like a Skyscraper"	This product is strong.
"A Pillow for the Body"	This product is comfortable.
"The Champagne of Ginger Ales"	This product is superior in taste.

ACTION SUGGESTED BY INFERENCE:

Selling Phrase	*Suggestion Conveyed*
"A Clean Tooth Never Decays"	Use a tooth brush.
"What a Whale of a Difference Just a Few Cents Make"	Buy quality.
"Four Out of Five Have It"	Prevent it. Use this product.

DIRECT COMMAND TO ACTION:

Selling Phrase	*Suggestion Conveyed*
"Guard the Danger Line"	Use this product to protect.
"Say It with Flowers"	Buy flowers to carry your message.
"Save the Surface and You Save All"	Buy paint to save the surface.

DIRECT CLAIM TO SUPERIORITY:

Selling Phrase	*Suggestion Conveyed*
"When Better Cars Are Built, Buick Will Build Them"	This car now the best.
"99 and $44/100$ Per Cent Pure"	This product very pure.
"Best in the Long Run"	This product very durable.

The salesman will discover ways of adapting to his own use these methods of suggestion that advertisers have found effective. For example, a salesman selling fountain pens might suggest quality by comparison, using some phrase like "This pen is a camel for ink." A shoe salesman might use suggestion by inference to keep a customer from taking an undersize shoe, saying, "You didn't come in to buy a pair of corns." By a little effort suggestive selling phrases can thus be originated. The mentally lazy salesman will probably think that this is too much trouble, preferring to borrow the second-hand phrases originated by others. The really progressive salesman will find that practice in thinking up new and effective forms of suggestion is interesting and immediately profitable.

Analysis of Verbal Suggestions.

If you will analyze these suggestive selling phrases, you will discover that most of them aim to arouse a chain of associations in the mind of the customer. The conclusion of this chain of ideas is a thought expressing the superiority of the product. Take, for example, the slogan "Ask the Man Who Owns One." If we expand this to the form of an argument, it would read something like this:

The man who owns this car ought to be able to judge its worth. The makers are so confident that their cars are giving satisfaction that they ask us to pick out any owner and ask for his opinion. That is rather convincing.

To take another case, consider the slogan "The Instrument of the Immortals." If we expand this into the form of an argument it would read something like this:

The world's greatest musicians ought to be able to pick a good instrument.
The greatest musicians have used this instrument.
Therefore this instrument must be good.

Clearly the suggestion form is much more likely to induce conviction than is the argumentative approach.

The Mechanism of Suggestion.[1]

We have now noted four types of suggestion. By way of review we may summarize these as follows:

Type I. Suggestion to produce an external reaction.
Type II. Suggestion to produce an internal reaction.
Type III. Suggestion to intensify a sensation.
Type IV. Suggestion to secure uncritical acceptance of an idea.

If we study the mechanism of these four types as illustrated in the examples given in the preceding pages, we discover that they have one thing in common. In every

[1] The discussion of the mechanism of suggestion here presented is necessarily limited in its scope. The student who desires to extend his knowledge in this field may consult an excellent bibliography prepared by Bird. See Suggestion and Suggestibility, *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 264–283, April, 1939.

case the suggestion required that the salesman *set in operation an already existing reaction pattern.*

Take the case of the woman reaching out her hand to receive the card that the salesman extended to her. All of her life she has been accustomed to respond in that way to objects handed to her. It is a well-established habit. The salesman simply presented the situation that would call forth this habitual behavior pattern.

Exactly the same thing happens when the salesman suggests an idea that is accepted uncritically. Thus when a salesman says enthusiastically, "Isn't that a splendid proposition, Mr. Smith?" he presents a familiar situation. Many times Mr. Smith has thus been called upon to agree. His friends use this form of question in getting his approval. He has the habit of nodding his head and assenting. The salesman capitalizes this habit.

If you will study any case of suggestion, you will find this basic idea involved. The salesman simply discovers an established way of reacting—habit, reflex, emotion, perception, association—and works out the situation necessary to throw this reaction into action.

The Dynamic Nature of Ideas.

Early writers on suggestion dramatized the facts just presented by formulating the so-called *law of dynamogenesis.* It was widely held that every idea of an action tends to lead to that action and every thought about a proposition tends to lead to belief unless hindered by an opposing idea. Thus if we say, "Just sign your name here," the customer tends to perform the act unless the contrary idea of not signing happens to come to mind. If the salesman says positively "This is exactly what you want," the idea tends to be accepted unless some phase of the situation brings up a negative idea.

There are many illustrations of this dynamic quality of ideas. The sign "Wet Paint" frequently arouses a strong impulse to touch the surface to see if it really is wet. Tell

children not to play with matches, and playing with matches immediately becomes of tremendous interest and a strong temptation. If someone in an audience yawns or coughs, others are likely to follow suit. If a man has to undress in the daytime, he is very likely to wind his watch, and an old story tells of a college professor who absent-mindedly went on to bed.

These are said to prove that ideas are dynamic. Perhaps it would be better to say that they illustrate the power of our reaction patterns once they are set in operation. If no counter-idea comes along to set off another reaction pattern, they tend to carry through to their accustomed conclusion.

As a matter of fact these counter-ideas do interfere constantly. Very few of the actions suggested to us are actually carried out. We have countless reaction patterns, and some of them are always bursting into activity at just the moment to upset the most careful suggestion of the salesman.

The salesman can do a number of things to sidetrack these interfering ideas and to increase the force of his suggestions. Repetition is one device. Some salesmen are trained to build up the "yes attitude" by repeated questions that call out an affirmative. Absence of distractions is a second important factor in making suggestions effective. It is usually best to present only one possibility for action. The appearance of dignity and prestige of the salesman is also important. Positive suggestions, such as "This way, please," are usually more effective than negative ones, such as "Don't go that way." The indirect suggestion of the form "Lots of people are buying this model" is usually considered less likely to arouse negative responses than the direct suggestion, "Buy this model."

One impeding idea which perhaps causes more difficulty than any other is the suggestion that the customer frequently receives that he is being "sold." In the midst of the most impressive presentation the salesman may make

use of a trick or phrase that reminds the customer that this is a sales interview. A salesman recently reported a typical instance of this kind. He had learned the trick of handing the prospect the fountain pen, ready to sign the order. He had also been told that if the customer did not take the pen, he should look at it critically, shake it, try it out on a bit of paper, and then present it a *second* time, thus suggesting that the prospect did not take it the first time because he realized that it was not in working order.

This salesman mastered all of this theory and on his first trial ran through his maneuvers quite skillfully. The unaccommodating prospect, however, did not take the pen. Instead, he broke into a torrent of abuse and ridicule. "Why," he said, "do you try a stale old sales trick like that one on me. Salesmen were doing that to me twenty years ago. If I'd taken all of the pens that have been stuck at me I'd be in the poorhouse now. No, I guess you and I can't do business."

Herein is the real reason why most sales "tricks" are poor sales tactics. They are likely to arouse negative ideas. They illustrate the force of counter suggestion.

The Actual Use of Suggestion in Selling.

In spite of all that has been said and written about the importance of suggestion, it is doubtful if many salesmen and advertisers deliberately make use of it, even though convinced of its efficiency. The reason for this lies in the fact that although the mechanism of suggestion is easy to understand, it is difficult to learn to work backward and produce a suggestion to order. Suppose, for example, that a salesman wanted to suggest that an automobile had a strong chassis. What could he say that would *indirectly* convey this idea? Is it likely that the average salesman could think of a really first-class method of making this suggestion on the spur of the moment and in the excitement of an important interview? It will be seen that for most salesmen it would be impossible.

Obviously, therefore, the proper way to make a practical application of the principles is to think out in advance what suggestion is to be made and the exact method for producing it. By repeated practice of this approach the salesman will eventually become skillful enough to think up effective suggestions during the interview itself. As in every other stage of learning to sell, the important thing is practice.

In planning to make use of suggestion the first question for the salesman to ask himself is: *Exactly what idea do I wish to convey, or what action do I wish to produce?* In most cases it will help to write down the answer to this question. Nothing clarifies an idea like trying to express it in words. Writing will frequently bring to light mistakes in aim or in method and point the way for better procedure.

To illustrate this point, a cigar-store clerk had been asking his customers "Would you like to buy 50 cigarettes for 50 cents?" when the customer asked for a 25-cent package that contained only 20. He found that this suggestion was not very effective—most men automatically refused to consider the proposition, having formed the habit of resisting the importunities of cigar clerks.

This clerk was asked to write down exactly what he wanted to get into the customer's mind. He wrote: "I want to suggest to him the saving that he can effect by buying the slightly larger size." He was then asked to analyze what ideas he was getting into the customer's mind by the present method. After considerable thought, for the problem is more complex than it looks, he concluded that "I am getting the prospect to think: Here is a cigar-store clerk who is trying to get me to buy more cigarettes; I won't!"

This man's experience brings out an important point. The salesman may carelessly think that he is creating one impression by his suggestions, whereas he is actually planting something very different in the mind of the customer. A life insurance salesman analyzed his methods and found

that he was suggesting "It's all right, if you don't want to do business today, I can call some other time." This was not what he wanted to convey at all. A salesman for a publisher thought that his laugh suggested friendship and congeniality, whereas it really suggested nervousness. An automobile salesman thought that his energetic manipulation of all the controls and shifts on the car suggested its mechanical superiority. As a matter of fact he frightened most prospects. A building-material salesman thought that his expensively tailored clothing suggested prosperity, but to many of his customers it suggested foppishness and snobbery. There is many a slip betwixt the impression that the salesman thinks that he is making and the effect produced upon the customer. The only remedy is a more careful analysis and a determined effort to correct the situation.

Planning Suggestions.

To illustrate the methods of correcting these misdirected suggestions, we may return to the problem of the cigar-store clerk and his suggestion that the customer could get more cigarettes at less cost by buying the 50-cent package. The salesman spent some time trying to find a way to convey this idea effectively. He happened to recall something that he had read to the effect that people can think better about a proposal if it is presented to them in concrete, visual form. Seeing is believing. He concluded that the most effective thing he could do would be actually to show the customer what he could buy for 25 cents and what he would get for 50 cents; let the customer see for himself, instead of merely telling him about the difference.

He therefore worked out a method that he habitually employed. When a customer asked for the particular brand of cigarettes, the clerk should reach for the smaller package with one hand while with the other he took down the larger size. As he turned, he held the two together for a moment in such a way that the customer could compare

them. Thus far the customer was pretty sure to have one idea: He is giving me a larger size! Then the clerk would shove the bigger package forward and pull the smaller one back, thus centering attention on the larger one. He would say: "I am not just trying to sell you more goods, but I wonder if you have seen this larger size. It costs 50 cents, and you get two and a half times as many cigarettes as you do with the 25-cent size." He found that presented in this fashion the larger package showed a decided increase in sales.

This case illustrates the important steps in developing an effective method of using suggestion. We may summarize these steps as follows:

1. Recognize the need and possibility of using suggestion in a specific situation.
2. Decide exactly what idea or action is to be suggested.
3. Recall or discover behavior patterns of the customer that might lead to the desired reaction.
4. Decide what situation—words, gestures, manner, dress, maneuver—will bring forth the desired reaction, without producing unfavorable consequences.
5. Practice the use of this suggestion until it becomes natural and easy.
6. Remember that suggestion may be the instrument of the confidence man and the thief. Use it only in a legitimate way, to sell honest goods. Do not use it in such a way as to arouse resistance.

Whether he likes it or not, the salesman has to use suggestion in selling. Every word and gesture carries its message to the customer. Certainly to use suggestion consciously is better workmanship than to trust to chance and trial-and-error methods. The danger in the conscious use of suggestion is that the salesman may clumsily reveal his methods, making the customer feel that he is being tricked. Diligence in practice and honesty of purpose will overcome this difficulty.

Questions and Exercises

1. How would you define suggestion?

2. Why are people suggestible? Explain in terms of the reaction-pattern theory given in Chapter VI.

3. Of the four types of suggestion enumerated in the text, which is of most importance in selling? Why?

4. Analyze the suggestion conveyed by the following phrases: "There's a Reason"; "Established 1847"; "Eventually—Why Not Now"; "If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak."

5. Devise a selling phrase to suggest the easy-riding qualities of a certain automobile, to suggest the purity of a certain brand of ice cream.

6. Present a plan for using suggestion to induce a customer to look at a sales portfolio.

7. Present a plan for using suggestion to convey to the customer the idea that a fountain pen is strong and durable.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER XV

THE NINTH PRINCIPLE—INDUCING ACTION—
(Continued)

Suggestion is an important tool for inducing action. It sometimes needs to be supplemented, however, by the more direct methods to which we give the general name of *persuasion.*

The term "persuasion" is not easy to define clearly. As ordinarily used, it means any attempt to move men to action by appeals to their intelligence, their imagination, or their emotion. Thus defined it would include arguments, suggestions, and all instinctive and emotional appeals.

In this chapter we shall follow a more limited definition of persuasion. We shall think of it as the method of producing action in the sale by appeals to emotions and wants, by imaginative appeals, and by the use of specific inducements. We should not forget, however, that the methods that we discussed in the chapters on conviction and suggestion have a real place in persuading men.

Persuading by Appeals to Emotions and Wants.

Modern psychologists tell us that the mainsprings of human behavior are to be found in the strong instinctive wants, the emotions, and the complex sentiments that are built up around these emotions and wants. If you wish to get a man to act, penetrate the surface veneer of civilization and culture and get down to these fundamentals. Someone in explaining the marvelous power that a great orator had over audiences remarked that he succeeded by "appealing to their gizzards." He persuaded them not by the force of his logic, which usually was rather feeble, but by the adroitness of his emotional incitements. He

illustrated the superiority of "heart appeals" over cold reason. He was like Demosthenes who remarked to a rival: "You make them say, 'How well he speaks.' I make them say, 'Let us march against Philip!'"

Since the salesman is so vitally concerned with this problem of stirring people to action, we must try to secure a sound understanding of this phase of human nature. The careers and speeches of great leaders afford the most available source for the study of this power of persuasion and may be analyzed with great profit. As an illuminating example, consider the case of Lloyd George, one of the most effective persuaders of his time. The following from "The Mirrors of Downing Street" has a real moral for the salesman:

But how is it that this politician has attained to such superprominence?

Another incident of which the public knows nothing, helps one, I think, to answer this question. Early in the struggle to get munitions for our soldiers a meeting of all the principal manufacturers of armaments was held in Whitehall with the object of persuading them to pool their trade secrets. For a long time this meeting was nothing more than a succession of blunt speeches on the part of provincial manufacturers, showing with an unanswerable commercial logic that the suggestion of revealing these secrets on which their fortunes depended was beyond the bounds of reason. All the injected arguments of the military and official gentlemen representing the Government were easily proved by these hard-headed manufacturers, responsible to their work people and shareholders for the prosperity of their competing undertakings, to be impracticable if not preposterous.

At a moment when the proposal of the Government seemed lost, Mr. Lloyd George leant forward in his chair, very pale, very quiet, and very earnest. "Gentlemen," he said in a voice which produced an extraordinary hush, "have you forgotten that your sons, at this very moment, are being killed—killed in hundreds and thousands? They are being killed by German guns for want of British guns. Your sons—your brothers—boys at the dawn of manhood!—they are being wiped out of life in thousands! Gentlemen, give me guns. Don't think of your trade secrets. Think of your children. Help them! Give me those guns."

This was no stage acting. His voice broke; his eyes filled with tears; and his hand, holding a piece of notepaper before him, shook like a leaf.

There was not a man who heard him whose heart was not touched and whose humanity was not quickened. The trade secrets were pooled. The supply of munitions was hastened.

This is the secret of his power. No man of our period, when he is profoundly moved and when he permits his genuine emotion to carry him away, can utter an appeal to conscience with anything like so compelling a simplicity.[1]

Intellectual *versus* Persuasive Appeals.

We have here a clear illustration of the difference between the *intellectual* and the *emotional* appeal. Of course this is an extreme example. It should not be thought that salesmen can hope to use any such forceful appeal to sentiment as Lloyd George was able to employ. The sales situation would not allow it. The customer would resent it, would rightly feel that he was being exploited. On the other hand, the salesman does not have to limit himself to a mere recital of good reasons for purchase. He can make use of sentiment and want and emotion, provided only he keep within the limits of good taste and common sense and fair dealing.

The experience of advertisers again serves to give a hint as to how this may be done. In the past fifty years advertising has increased greatly in craftsmanship. Much has been learned about the public and how to appeal to it. One of the outstanding lines of development has been to make copy more persuasive. Contrast the appeal that the Prudential Life Insurance Company was using at the beginning of the century with that in use today. Here is what they said in 1897:

The Prudential issues Life Insurance Policies for children, women, and men, ages, 1 to 70—$15 to $50,000 under profit-sharing policies. Has life insurance in force $320,453,483 under nearly 2,500,000 policies. Has assets, $19,541,827. Income, $14,158,445. Surplus, $4,034,116. Claims paid, over $26,000,000.

This may have been good selling talk in 1897. It is hard to judge from this distance. It would not be good sales

[1] "The Mirrors of Downing Street," pp. 5, 6, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1921.

talk today. People are simply not interested in such attempts to convince by statistics of policies and income, assets, surplus, and claims paid. Prudential now recognizes that fact. Here is how they advertise today. They show a picture of a man with a fishing rod, and they ask:

Wouldn't you enjoy leisure at three score?

Now that does not sound much like Lloyd George's eloquent appeal to the armament manufacturers, but the fundamental principle is the same. If you want to persuade people to action, appeal to some of their strong motives.

Additional cases will suggest specific ways in which this principle is being applied by various manufacturers. Below are given representative selling appeals in use forty years ago and the appeals being used by the same companies more recently.

Typical Selling Appeal Forty Years Ago	Typical Selling Appeal Today
Eastman folding pocket kodaks have achromatic lenses and automatic shutters, are made of aluminum, and load in daylight.	Movies at their wedding! How the bride and the groom will appreciate your gift of a Cine'-Kodak.
Knox's gelatin has revolutionized the gelatin trade of America. Housewives marvel at its lack of odor and at its transparency.	This beautiful, appetizing dessert is just one of the everyday dishes with which you may easily and quickly add extra health and enjoyment to your table by the use of Knox Sparkling gelatin.
Divide a cake of Ivory soap with a stout thread, and you have two perfectly formed cakes of convenient size for the toilet.	The hands that set a table with fine linen and gleaming silver should themselves look ready for the party. They can—if they use Ivory.
Walter Baker & Company's Breakfast cocoa. Absolutely pure.	How much those little bundles of activity—the children—need the

Delicious. Nutritious. Cost less than one cent a cup.

gentle, glowing benefit of a steaming cup of Baker's cocoa.

Born in Elgin. Run all 'round the world. In the pockets of engineers everywhere are to be found Full Ruby Jewelled Elgin Watches.

Not far away from you is one of Cupid's chief lieutenants. He carries no bow. No quiver full of darts. But a showcase full of sentiment's finest tokens. He is your nearest Elgin dealer.

Used at night with tepid water, all dandruff is removed, the skin is cleaned and healed, and the hair left soft and silky. Such are the effects of Packer's tar soap.

Does your hair make you *prettier?* Does its natural little lights warm your coloring? Does its gleam lend a sparkle to your eyes? Your hair is *so* important. And brings to your looks such charm if it is always fluffy, soft, alive. To make it so—here are 2 Packer Shampoos.

Analysis of Persuasive Methods in Selling.

Methods in personal selling have been following much the same lines of development that we find here indicated in advertising copy. For example, life insurance salesmen no longer bore the customer with long discussions of statistics of mortality. They are being trained to talk less about insurance and more about what insurance will do for the customer. They talk about the comfort and independence that insurance can bring in old age—exactly the same appeal that we find in the Prudential advertisement. Here is a part of one agent's sales talk:

I just want you to imagine yourself thirty years from now, starting out in your car, maybe, for a carefree drive out to the country club for a round of golf or for a pleasure trip with your wife. That's what insurance is for, I think—to give a man that comfortable sense of security There's nothing like it.

Automobile salesmen have caught the same idea. They talk about the mechanics of the car enough to satisfy the customer's need for conviction. Then, to bring in the element of persuasion, they appeal to pride, to comfort, to

safety. Here is a characteristic paragraph from the sales manual of a well-known automobile manufacturer:

I want to call your attention to the beautiful streamline design. We are mighty proud of the appearance of this model. It compares favorably in appearance with much higher-priced cars. It is a car you will be proud to have parked in front of your home.

These illustrations suggest the main points in the modern method of sales persuasion. If we analyze this method, we find two characteristic devices:

1. *Persuasion by Appeal to Imagination, e.g.:*

Imagine yourself thirty years from now—car—golf—country club—pleasure trip—carefree.
This fine car parked in front of your home.
Movies at their wedding!
This beautiful, appetizing dessert.
Hands that set a table with fine linen and gleaming silver.
Little bundles of activity—the children.
Cupid's chief lieutenants.
Natural little lights warm your coloring.

2. *Persuasion by Appeal to the Individual's Wants, e.g.:*

Gives a man that comfortable sense of security.
Proud to have this car parked in front of the house.
Wouldn't you enjoy leisure?
Add extra health and enjoyment.
The children need it.
Makes you prettier.

If we turn back to Lloyd George's speech, we find that he used exactly the same means in persuading the manufacturers to pool their trade secrets. First he gave them a vivid picture. He appealed to their imagination. He made them see the soldiers—boys at the dawn of manhood—dying in the trenches, wiped out of life in thousands. Then he appealed to their emotions. Then he showed them a way to remedy the situation.

We may reduce all this to a simple formula, as follows: *To persuade a man to action, give him a vivid picture of a present situation or a future possibility in which his wants or*

emotions are involved. Show him that by accepting your proposition he can secure satisfaction.

Creating a Vivid Picture: Concrete Words.

If you could take a sample of the stream of ideas in the mind of your customer, you will find that most of the time he is occupied with concrete things. He is thinking about his work, his friends, his office, his family, his home, his car, his pipe, his clothing, his physical sensations. He has little time for thoughts about abstract ideas such as justice, immortality, wisdom, faith, culture. It is hard for him to think about these abstract things. To persuade him, give him vivid pictures and make those pictures vivid by cramming them full of concrete details. Note the application of this principle in the following pairs:

Abstract Statement	Statement Revised to Make It More Concrete and Persuasive
This washer will save you lots of time.	With this washer you can be done by ten o'clock. Think of the time that leaves you to read or to see people you want to see.
The best people are using our service.	Mrs. Wolson, Mrs. Clarence Tormolen, Mrs. William Worthington—over a hundred and thirty of the leading housekeepers on this street—are already using this service.
This machine is really very cheap.	For one-third of a cent a day you can have this machine right in your office, working for you all the time.
We have these in various patterns.	We have these in navy blue, seal brown, Oxford gray, Cambridge gray, or with hairline or chalk-line stripes.
That tire will wear well.	You can punish that tire over rough roads, and it will wear like iron.

Vividness by Means of Figures of Speech.

Figures of speech are usually considered a fitter diet for the poet than for the businessman; but if you study the language of persuasive salesmen, you will find that they do not scorn the extra vitality that a few strong illustrations and comparisons give to a sales talk. Some of the simpler devices are:

Comparison:

This car runs like a greyhound.
This looks like silk but wears like cotton.
This garment is as light as a topcoat but as warm as a heavy overcoat.
Fills just like a fountain pen, with this simple lever.

Implied Comparison:

This fabric is a bear for punishment.
The carbureter is the heart of the motor.
We are putting these cigars out in glassine dresses.
Every man needs a good backlog of sound securities.
The bristles of this brush are anchored in the rubber handle.

The Striking Analogy:

You are like the woman who argued that she could afford to sell her apples for less than they cost her because she sold so many.

Buying this machine is like hiring a dozen men to work for you for 80 cents a day.

Paying a dollar a week on this plan is like planting a thousand fruit trees. You can enjoy the fruit and the shade for years to come.

The camel has to meet blazing hot days and shivering cold nights. In the spring you have to meet similar sudden changes in temperature. That's why a camel's-hair topcoat is so comfortable.

This pen is like the pitcher that never had to be filled.

Subscribing to this magazine is like buying 24 high-grade, full-length novels for a dollar and a half.

Contrast:

No more broken fingernails and scratched hands. This patented opener does away with all that.

Most companies want to divorce the customer from his money. We want to marry you to profits.

This isn't like putting all your eggs in one basket. It is like having a lot of baskets and putting them all in a safe place.

With this lighter you don't have to give an imitation of a boy scout trying to start a fire by rubbing two sticks.

The Illustrative Anecdote:

Perhaps you have heard the story about the monkey that put his hand in the gourd and tried to pull out a whole handful of nuts. They filled his hand so full that he couldn't get it out. And since he was so greedy that he wouldn't let loose of any of the nuts, he was caught fast. In your investments, do not try to grab too much.

Did you ever hear the story of the man who traveled all over the world looking for diamonds and finally heard that a diamond mine had been discovered in his own back yard? That is exactly what you have here—a diamond mine.

When Benjamin Franklin wanted to make a decision on an important matter, he would draw a line on a sheet of paper. On one side of the line he would put down all the reasons for the decision, and on the other side he would enter the reasons against action. Then he would weigh the two columns and finally make up his mind. Why don't you do that with this proposition?

It is not always easy to unearth these effective words and phrases. Once in a long time they occur to the salesmen in the course of the interview. Sometimes they are suggested by an alert sales manager or given in an instruction book. Most salesmen, by a little effort, could add to their stock of such selling phrases, and it will be found to be a very profitable mental exercise to see how many new points can thus be brought out.

Vividness by Sensory Appeals.

Referring once more to the comparison of old-style and modern selling appeals, it will be noted that the latter abound in words that have a strong sensory quality. By that we mean that they bring up vivid imagery. They give a striking impression of tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, feeling. They are sprinkled with such image-provoking phrases as, "gleaming silver," "fine linen," "steaming cup," "sparkling eyes," "natural little lights in the hair."

These are good selling phrases. All of our knowledge of our world comes to us through our senses—vision, hearing,

taste, touch, smell. Later we are able to recall images of these sensory impressions. Actually these images which flit through our minds as we listen to a salesman or read an advertisement are apt to be but pale shadows of the original experience. They lack something of the persuasive quality of the real thing. Effective selling talk overcomes this weakness by painting such a vivid picture that even the dullest imagination is stirred—just as Lloyd George made his audience see the boys in the trenches being wiped out of life in thousands.

Action from Appeal to Instincts, Emotions, Desires.

In an earlier chapter we gave lists of the strong wants, instincts, emotions, and desires and pointed out that they are the sources of most human activities. Such lists, however, are rather abstract. Our present problem is to discover the methods by which concrete, persuasive appeals are built around these potent human motives.

It will be helpful here to distinguish between the *form* of the persuasive appeal and the *content* of the appeal. The most commonly used forms are the following.

FORMS OF PERSUASIVE APPEALS

The Command:

Don't let false pride keep you from enjoying a better car.

Don't let skin troubles deny you life's thrilling moments.

Protect your home and your loved ones.

Watch those vital years when your children's sturdy bodies are at stake.

March straight ahead toward your goal of financial independence.

The Exclamation:

Gosh, it would be great if you could surprise your family with a fine car like this!

You should have seen his wife's face when he told her that the boss had given him a twenty-five dollar raise because he took our course!

And to be able to *know* that your family will be taken care of, no matter what happens to you—what a satisfaction!

What a thrill you will get when you set up this instrument right in your own home!

Comfort! You will find it the most comfortable shoe you ever wore.

The Personal Plea:

Be a good fellow, and tell me you have made up your mind.

Come on, be a sport for once, and take a chance. You can't go wrong on this deal.

I know you would never let me down on a deal like this.

The Rhetorical Question:

You don't mean to tell me that you are not interested in making more money, do you?

Why worry about buying from the jobber? Are you building his business or your own?

Do you want to leave your wife and children for someone else to support?

You don't want to be called a cheap penny pincher, do you?

You would like to be financially secure, wouldn't you?

The Dilemma Question:

If your wife were suffering from appendicitis today and the doctor ordered her to the hospital for an operation, would you argue that you couldn't afford it or would you send her?

The Inspiring Generalization:

It is just as important to feed the mind as to feed the body.

A lovely skin is the most appealing charm a girl can have.

No man ever solved a problem by running away from it. Sooner or later every man has to make his decision on this proposition.

The easiest thing in the world is for a man to quit growing mentally and to find himself in a rut.

No one can take away from you the satisfaction of knowing that you have given your family the best there is.

The Picture of Satisfaction:

Out in California you can play for once in your life—really do the things you have always wanted to do.

Before you know it, your work will have improved and you will hear the boss say, "We are going to increase your salary because you have earned it."

With the car you can get out into the open country, see the woods and the fields, get the fresh air and the sunshine—enjoy well-earned recreation.

Some day your boy will be old enough to understand and he will say, "My father was mighty thoughtful—a mighty good father to me."

When you have your own little home out here, you will discover the biggest contentment a man ever knows.

The Picture of Dissatisfaction and Loss:

Without a car there is the long walk to the street car, the wait in the rain and cold, then the crowding and the jostling and the stuffy air.

Most men never realize the aching arms, numbed wrists, bruised hands that women get from handling the ice in the old-style ice box.

No merchant wants to be branded as a gyp.

You don't want to see this desirable line snapped up by your competitors, I know.

You don't want to leave your children plugging away at tasks beyond their strength, while other men's youngsters are at play.

The Complimentary Argument:

A good manager like you ought to be able to handle our line.

I would not be here unless I were convinced that you are the best man to deal with on this proposition.

That argument fools a good many men, but I don't think it will deceive a man of your intelligence.

You look to me like a man who would be prompt to act once he has the evidence before him.

A modern progressive housekeeper like you demands the best. Here it is.

The "If You Want——" Form:

If you want to create a good impression on a banker or your employer, show that you have initiative enough to save money.

If peace of mind means anything to you, keep a box in your medicine cabinet.

If bringing in the distant stations gives you a thrill, here is the radio for you.

If you are trying to get ahead, hoping and working for promotion, this may be the means of succeeding in your ambition.

If you want that nut-sweet, full-bodied, old-time richness, here is the answer.

The Content of Persuasive Appeals.

In giving these examples of the different forms of persuasive appeals we have also given a good idea of the range of *content* in such appeals. By content, we mean the

impelling idea, the thought that moves the customer to action.

If we attempt to classify the contents of these various appeals, we find that the logical method would be in terms of the various impulses and emotions and wants appealed to. A few examples:

1. *Persuasive Appeals to Desire for Superiority.*—Be a leader. Be the first merchant in town to show these new styles.

2. *Persuasive Appeals to Love of Mate.*—After all, a man's first job is to provide protection for his wife.

3. *Persuasive Appeals to Love of Children.*—I know that you are thinking of your children's future, wanting them to grow up to be strong, happy, successful.

4. *Persuasive Appeals to Fear.*—I suppose every thoughtful man considers the future—what would happen if he lost his position, if he became ill or suffered a serious accident. Our company tries to supply a comforting answer to that question.

5. *Persuasive Appeals to Desire for Appetizing Food.*—With this aluminum waffle iron you can turn out delicious, golden-brown waffles that fairly melt in your mouth.

6. *Persuasive Appeals to Desire for Comfort.*—Don't put up with the old, back-breaking washer. Here is a machine that takes all the drudgery out of washday.

These suggest the manner in which appeals may be made to the long list of human wants given in Chapter VI. It is manifestly beyond the scope of our present discussion to cover the complete list, but the illustrations given will be sufficient to demonstrate the principle.

Appeals to Pride.

It will be useful, however, to make a more detailed analysis of the possibilities of appealing to one very strong human tendency. This tendency is variously known as pride, ambition, desire for superiority, craving for applause and social approval, vanity, rivalry, emulation. Some

psychologists trace these back to a single root—the want for superiority—and we shall here employ that term.

This universal want for superiority is worthy of being singled out for special attention because of the great part that it plays in our economic life. An economist—Taussig—in speaking of one aspect of this drive has pointed out that in the economic sphere it is the force that more than any other influences the young businessman. He adds, "It is of the essence of social emulation that there is never an end to it,"—that whoever may be in the van, someone else wishes to surpass him. A psychologist—Woodworth—has remarked that "Of all the native tendencies this [self-assertion or mastery] is the one most frequently aroused, since there is scarcely a moment of waking or dreaming life when it is not more or less in action." Another psychologist—James—in speaking of rivalry, which we may consider as one element of this want for mastery, has said that nine-tenths of the world's work is motivated by it. We may conclude that here is a phase of human nature of the greatest possible interest to the salesman. It tinctures every human contact, enters into every sale.

There are certain rules that are helpful in the actual application of mastery appeals in selling. Of these the following is basic: *If possible, show the customer that the acceptance of your proposal will give him satisfaction of pride, especially in the line in which he most desires it.* Thus an encyclopedia salesman shows his prospects that increased knowledge will make them more successful. A tailor impresses his customers with the value of the feeling of being well dressed. A fountain-pen company stresses the pride of possessing an expensive desk set.

The negative side of this rule is: *Show the customer that if he fails to purchase, he may lose satisfaction of pride.* An insurance man, for example, suggests the poor opinion that society has of the man who fails to care for his family. Salesmen selling books of etiquette play up the loss of prestige that comes from ignorance of social usage. There

are many other applications of this method. Many of them approach the doubtful tactics of the high-pressure salesman. It should be noted that this negative appeal to pride must be used with great care, otherwise it will arouse resistance and thus defeat itself.

As a third rule, *if possible suggest that your proposal is exclusive—but at the same time well within the reach of the customer.* Millions of dollars are spent every year to gratify vanity. Many products are purchased less for the intrinsic service that they render than for the feeling of superiority that they give to the owner. Fur coats, jewelry, automobiles are familiar examples. The salesman who handles a product with such an appeal should remember that the customer wants to feel that he is getting something not available to the common herd.

As a fourth rule, *if possible suggest that the purchase will enable the customer to get ahead of a rival.* Almost every man or woman has a competitor. There are competitions in business, in construction, for promotion, in courtship, in sport, in society. Most people are extremely conscious of the rival and interested in anything that will make it possible to outdistance him. For many products this appeal, used with discretion, is extremely potent.

The Relative Persuasiveness of Appeals.

We have said that the want for mastery is very strong, but there are, of course, many other appeals that in certain circumstances may be much more powerful and appropriate. No general list can be given showing the relative strength of these various appeals, since much depends upon the product being sold. It is thus obvious that an analysis should be made in each case to discover the most effective talking points and how to use them.

Of the methods used to discover the effective appeal the most widely employed is that of personal judgment. "That would sell me," the salesman says and proceeds on the assumption that because it impels him, it will also move

others. Of course, it frequently happens that his ideas are biased or narrow. This method, then, is effective only as the salesman's judgment is representative.

A second method is to depend upon the pooled judgments of several salesmen. Some companies hold conferences in which the men exchange experiences and conclusions. This is helpful, as it tends to bring to light new appeals and to force a more correct evaluation of old ones.

Closely related is a third method, which is more scientific. It consists in actual experimentation with appeals and the recording of results from various presentations. This has been carried out most effectively in advertisements, where results may in some instances be traced, and a few advertisers know quite accurately what response they may expect from copy appealing to fear or pride or appetite, and so on. In personal selling it is usually difficult to trace the sale to a specific appeal, but some companies by a careful check on results have been able to decide fairly accurately the strongest type of selling talk.

A fourth method attempts to measure appeals in terms of the customer's own introspective opinion as to what impels him to buy. In its simplest form this merely involves asking a group of customers to state their motives in purchasing. Sometimes a more elaborate research is undertaken in which hundreds of people are interviewed, their opinions collected and tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. Here, also, the advertising department has been more active than the sales division, and advertisers have, by the use of this method, secured very complete data upon which to base copy appeals.

The importance of all these methods should be clear to any salesman. In the final analysis his task is to encourage people to act. His tools are the persuasive appeals. If he is to be most successful, those tools must be selected with care, adjusted to the demands of the specific sales situation. The thoughtful salesman will supply himself with a wide knowledge of human motives and exert himself to discover

which motives play the major part in the sale of his product and which ways of appealing to those motives are most persuasive.

Summary and Conclusion.

In his work of helping people buy, the salesman must frequently make use of persuasion. Modern selling is becoming more persuasive, but in a more subtle and more ethical way. Such persuasion must not be too strong or too obvious; else resistance will be aroused and bad aftereffects result. The salesman desiring to employ this legitimate type of persuasion may profit by the habitual observation of the following:

1. Analyze the customer's strong buying motives—his wants, desires, urges, emotions, habits.
2. Experiment to discover the relative strength of appeals for the product in question.
3. Give the customer a vivid picture of the possibility of satisfying his wants through the purchase of the product or service.
4. Make the appeal vivid by the use of concrete words, effective comparisons, strong contrasts, striking analogies, apt illustrations, image-provoking expressions.
5. Originate, practice, and record effective examples of the various forms of persuasion. Study books, orations, plays, sales letters, advertisements, private conversations, for illustrations of effective presentations. Seek constantly for increased facility in the use of these tools of salesmanship.

Questions and Exercises

1. What is persuasion?
2. Is it ethical to use persuasion in selling?
3. Discuss the psychology of persuasion. What makes persuasion possible?
4. Why are concrete expressions useful in persuasion?
5. What are the common forms of persuasive appeals?
6. What methods have been used to estimate the relative persuasiveness of appeals?
7. Present, in a sentence or two, a common-sense, reason-why appeal to be used in selling a pair of shoes. Then rewrite the appeal to make it more persuasive.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER XVI

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES IN SPECIAL FIELDS

In the preceding chapters we have analyzed nine fundamental principles of effective selling. These principles apply in some degree in all kinds of selling and to all salesmen. Some aspects of these principles, however, are of greater importance in certain types of sales situations than in others, and it will be useful to make a closer study of specific applications.

Types of Selling.

In Chapter I various methods of classifying types of selling were presented. Each classification suggests special problems in connection with the application of our selling principles. Ideally it would be desirable to consider each type separately or, better still, to consider the selling problems of each individual organization. Since, for practical reasons, this is impossible, we shall be forced to adopt an arbitrary division. In this chapter we shall study the problems of those types of selling in which the salesman takes the initiative and goes out to solicit trade; in the next chapter we shall deal with retail selling, the outstanding example of exchange in which the customer seeks the goods. In considering applications of the principles of selling this is probably the most vital grouping that can be made.

Selling, Type I: Soliciting.

Of the two forms of selling just mentioned, that in which the salesman actively approaches the customer to solicit business is universally recognized as the more dramatic and more difficult. In fact, some practitioners claim that this is the only true salesmanship and that all else is mere order taking. Obviously it does require more skill and initiative

to find, approach, and interest a man who has not indicated a willingness to buy than it does to take care of the expressed wants of a retail customer. It is easy to understand why this kind of selling has had such wide attention, and it is clear that our principles of selling apply with special force in this field.

There is no one word in our language that satisfactorily designates this type of selling. We cannot call it traveling salesmanship, for that term has come to apply to a special group of commercial travelers. We might call this "aggressive selling," but aggressive suggests high-pressure sales efforts. If the language allowed us to speak of "initiative selling," perhaps that phrase would approximate the idea we wish to express—the idea of the salesman actively going out to sell. Soliciting is also a fairly satisfactory term, but the adjective *solicitous* unfortunately does not apply very well.

For the purposes of this chapter we shall solve the difficulty by speaking of selling of Type I, meaning solicitation, and selling of Type II, meaning all other selling in which the customer seeks the goods and the salesman.

Theories of Selling Stress Solicitation.

Most of the writers on salesmanship have been dominated by the aggressive concept, and the general texts dwell almost exclusively upon sales situations involving solicitation. Attempts at analysis of the selling process have been greatly influenced by this concept. These analyses usually stress either the mental journey of the customer or the sequence of events from the salesman's point of view. In either case the emphasis is on the problems of *finding*, *approaching*, and *interesting* the prospect, the characteristic problems in this form of selling. The following list of steps in the sale is typical:

STEPS IN SELLING

1. Preparing to sell.
2. Locating prospects.

3. Making the approach and securing an audience.
4. Sizing up the customer.
5. Securing his attention.
6. Arousing his interest.
7. Presenting the proposition.
8. Meeting objections.
9. Closing the sale.

Compare this outline with a similar one for the retail sale, and it will be apparent that selling of the soliciting type must stress the first six steps. *To locate, to approach,* and *to interest* the customer are its characteristic functions, its chief points of difference from Type II.

Locating Possible Buyers. Prospecting.

As a necessary preliminary the salesman who goes out to seek customers must know where probable purchasers are located. He must have some system of prospecting.

The crudest method is the so-called "cold canvass," which means that the salesman simply goes from house to house or from office to office, calling without previous knowledge of the wants or needs or personality of the customer.

Even in the cold canvass, however, we find a certain amount of *selection.* Usually a specific group, such as housewives, office workers, or merchants, is singled out. Sometimes the salesman approaches only the houses that appear well kept or the stores that look prosperous or the offices in a certain section of town. In general, as selling becomes more expert, we find more emphasis on this process of selection and qualification. Thus by degree we come to what may be called the semiprepared approach.

On this second level we find that the salesman has planned his work so that there is a fair degree of certainty that the prospect is a possible purchaser. Some salesmen, for example, make use of lists of people known to have made purchases that would logically place them in the market for the goods to be presented. Thus a man selling automobile accessories uses a list of automobile owners.

In the same way lists of people in a certain profession may be used or lists of marriage licenses, births, new buildings, and the like.

Closely related is the use of names supplied by customers or friends. Some salesmen try to make each interview lead to two or three additional prospects. Others try to secure the assistance of an influential person, such as a clergyman or a prominent society woman, who may open the way to possible buyers.

We thus move up the scale to the fully prepared approach. Here we find the salesman equipping himself with exact information covering the name, location, needs, buying power, and buying inclination of the prospect. In important sales this information may be very detailed. In other cases it may be little more than a "lead," that is, the knowledge that a certain individual, to be found at a certain place, is interested in the product. Some companies find it necessary to supply their representatives with such leads, taken from inquiries brought in by advertising or from other sources. In most instances, however, it is absolutely necessary that the salesman himself assume the major portion of the burden of finding logical buyers.

Since prospecting is such an important part of the day's work, a careful analysis of possible sources of information is desirable. The check list on page 290 may be used to advantage in making sure that no important avenue of information has been overlooked.

The salesman will usually find it helpful to keep all information about prospects on file in a systematic and convenient fashion. Many salesmen keep a card index of prospects and customers. In some lines the information thus recorded is very complete. Common sense should dictate the amount of time to be spent in such foundation work. Records should be productive. They should not be elaborated merely for their own sake. They are a means to the end—selling goods—and are to be judged in the light of their aid in accomplishing that end.

Check List of Sources of Names and Information

——Do you ask present customers to suggest names of friends or acquaintances who might buy?

——Could you secure suggestions for prospects from any of the following:

——Bankers.
——Clergymen.
——Newspaper men.
——Editors of trade papers.
——Doctors.
——Dentists.
——Barbers.
——Hotel clerks.
——Teachers.
——Nurses.
——Janitors.
——Telephone operators.
——Delivery men.
——Office employees.
——Society women.
——Public officials.
——City and state employees.
——Secretaries of chambers of commerce.
——Lodge officials.
——Other salesmen.

——Could you secure names of prospective customers from any of the following lists:

——Lists of lodge members.
——Automobile registration lists.
——Commercial mailing lists.
——Classified telephone lists.
——Membership lists of clubs.
——City directories.
——Lists of teachers.
——Marriage-license lists.
——Trade directories.
——Nurses' directory.
——Social register.
——Tax lists.
——Dun and Bradstreet.
——Mortgage lists.
——Trade directories.
——College and university catalogs.
——Lists of alumni, and graduates.
——Birth and death notices.
——Membership lists of social and religious organizations.
——Notices of real-estate transfers.
——Hospital registers.
——Newspaper personals.
——Society notes.
——Trade, industrial, and class publication personals.

The Approach.

Prospecting is incidental to the application of the first great principle of selling—adequate preparation. As soon as the salesman approaches the customer, other principles begin to assume importance. The clever salesman aims especially at building acceptance and creating a favorable impression from the first moment of contact.

Some men prepare the way for the call by sending advance notice. House-to-house canvassers have worked out several successful plans along this line. One common method is the card announcing that a free article such as a brush or an aluminum pan or similar sample of the salesman's wares will be given to the customer.

Some companies try to secure a favorable classification for their salesmen by the use of advertising that builds up a picture of the salesman as a pleasant, interesting, cultured serviceman. Sometimes the salesman himself makes use of the newspaper to announce his presence in town and to bespeak a favorable hearing. Traveling salesmen may use advance cards to announce to the trade the date of their intended visit.

Many salesmen find it advantageous to secure an introduction through a friend of the customer. Where possible, this is usually an effective method of establishing cordial relations.

Securing the Interview.

In many lines the salesman meets a certain amount of resistance when he attempts to approach the customer. This is unavoidable, and the man who cannot steel himself to meet rebuffs has little place in selling of Type I. It is well to remember that the rebuffs are usually not personal but simply reflect the customer's wish to avoid effort or distraction. The salesman should set out to meet the problem intelligently, determined to get an audience but to accomplish this in such a manner as to build acceptance and to encourage favorable classification.

For salesmen calling on customers in offices there is always the difficult problem of getting a favorable report carried into the prospect by the secretary or telephone operator or office boy. Dozens of devices have been worked out by hard-pressed salesmen. Here are a few of them, good and bad:

Sending in a card with the name of the company, if it is a well-known organization and likely to create a good impression.

Scribbling some interesting or curiosity-provoking comment on a card, to be sent in to the prospect.

Assuming an important manner and using some impressive formula such as: "I am to see Mr. Smith."

Flattering the guardian of the outer office in order to get a favorable report carried in.

Using some trick, such as posing as an investigator.

Sending in a card with only the salesman's name and no indication of his business.

Claiming that he is to see the prospect on "a private matter."

Making an appointment by telephone, with or without revealing the nature of the proposition.

Some of these devices are sound; others are likely to make the prospect feel that he has been tricked and thus produce in him a very unfavorable reaction to the sales proposition. In most cases it is poor business to use questionable methods in securing the interview. Modern business concerns are showing an increasing tendency to make it a rule to see all salesmen who have a constructive message to present, and trickery is becoming less necessary and less profitable.

The Introduction.

The salesman's introductory remarks are something like the opening moves in a chess game—they determine the course of much that follows. The beginner, expecially, needs to have a set of planned phrases, designed to start the interview off effectively.

A comparison of various types of introduction in common use will be helpful. The following may be noted:

COMMON WAYS OF BEGINNING THE INTERVIEW

1. *The "Few-minutes-of-your-time" Introduction.*—"Good morning, Mr. Jones. I wonder if you would give me a few minutes of your time to tell you about our proposition?"

2. *The "Happened-by" Introduction.*—"Mr. Jones, I just happened to be in the neighborhood, and I thought I would drop in to see if you are interested in anything in my line."

3. *The Conversational Introduction.*—"Well, how is business, Mr. Jones?"

4. *The Disarming-resistance Introduction.*—"Mr. Jones, I am from the Surety Life Insurance Company. I assume that you already think that you have enough life insurance. There is not a chance in a thousand that I could hit on the exact day to come to see you when you would be ready for more. If you will allow me, however, I would like to talk with you about the insurance that you already have and your future plans."

5. *The Indirect Introduction.*—"I have just been noticing your attractive window display, Mr. Merchant. You have a fine line here. I suppose you have all this insured. Most merchants do. Yet your risk of being put out of business by fire is very small—about one chance in four hundred I understand. Quite a small chance as compared with other serious dangers against which your business is not insured. It is about those dangers that I want to talk to you."

6. *The Puzzling-question Introduction.*—"Mrs. Jones, I came to ask you if you buy your household supplies at wholesale or retail?"

7. *The Challenge Introduction.*—"Mr. Merchant, I have an interesting proposition to present; but before I go into it, I should like to ask you one question. Are you in position to cater to a high-grade clientele?"

8. *The Promise-of-interesting-information Introduction.*—"For over three years the organization I represent has been

collecting information about retail operations. It has been discovered that over 60 per cent of retailers either fail outright or just barely struggle along. Forty per cent are relatively successful. I believe you would like to know the reasons behind the 60 per cent failures and the 40 per cent of successes, would you not?"

This list of ways of introducing the interview is incomplete. Some of these methods are good; some of them are bad. They are intended merely to suggest the various possibilities. The salesman will need to work out for himself an introduction suited to his personality, to his product, and to his customers. In general he will find the following rules helpful:

RULES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

1. Never begin the interview with an apology unless the customer has indicated that he expects one.
2. If possible begin with something sure to be of immediate interest to the customer.
3. Begin with statements with which the customer can agree.
4. If the customer is likely to have a strong resistance to considering the proposition, begin with some aspect toward which he does not have such resistance.
5. Do not suggest by words or manner that resistance is expected.
6. Avoid the introduction that makes it easy for the customer to say "No."

Interesting the Prospect. Appeals.

Having located the prospect and secured an audience, the salesman meets a third problem, that of arousing interest. He has to build up the buying attitude, as contrasted with the retail salesman who merely fosters and directs it.

Interest is not something that can be created. The salesman cannot make the customer have interest. Interest is rather to be thought of as a mental state that occurs when a strong want or need or desire of the customer has been appealed to successfully. The fundamental way to make the proposition interesting is to link it to some of the motives that we considered in Chapter VIII.

In our earlier discussion of buying motives the emphasis was largely placed on the primary appeals, such as those to appetite, pride, and fear. In many forms of solicitation these more direct channels to interest cannot be used or must be used but incidentally. The salesman will find it advisable to prepare a list of appeals that are especially suited to his product. The following list of buying motives for industrial goods as given by Copeland,[1] is a good example of such an analysis:

BUYING MOTIVES FOR INDUSTRIAL GOODS

1. Economy in use. Saves time, labor, materials.
2. Protection against loss.
3. Enhancing productivity of plant.
4. Dependability in use.
5. Dependability in quality.
6. Flexibility in operation or use.
7. Simplicity in operation.
8. Handiness.
9. Facility in installation.
10. Durability.
11. Facility in making repairs.
12. Enhancing salability of product.
13. Facility in executive control.
14. Aiding sales promotion.
15. Safeguarding welfare and morale of employees.
16. Sanitation of plant.
17. Economy in purchase.

PATRONAGE MOTIVES

1. Reliability of seller.
2. Punctuality of delivery.
3. Promptness of delivery.
4. Securing exact fulfilment of specifications.
5. Variety of selection.
6. Engineering and designing service.
7. Dependable repair service.

A list such as this, adapted to the particular product or service being sold, will suggest the line that the sales talk

[1] COPELAND, MELVIN T., "Principles of Merchandising," McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1924.

should take in order to stimulate the buying attitude. This is the best recipe for arousing the customer's interest. Show him how his wants are going to be satisfied.

The Sales Talk in Solicitation.

As we have already shown, the distinctive characteristics of selling of Type I are to be found in the earlier stages. When we come to the sales talk itself, much the same principles are important as in all selling and require little elaboration beyond the discussion given in earlier chapters. It is clear that the salesman must build acceptance, foster favorable perception, maintain the selling attitude, appeal to the customer's wants, dramatize the product, remove obstacles, and persuade to action. These apply in all selling. Particular products may, however, require special emphasis on one or more of these general rules. A brief discussion of the common varieties of solicitation will suggest the possibilities along this line.

Canvassing House to House.

Of all the varieties of selling, house-to-house canvassing best illustrates the need for application of all of the principles of selling. From the first moment of the sale, resistance is encountered, which can be overcome only by the salesman who is thoroughly prepared. The prospect is not in the buying mood, and this mood can be aroused only by a sales talk that makes a strong appeal to wants and needs and desires, induces favorable classification in the face of many adverse factors, dramatizes the product, and carries conviction in spite of strong initial disbelief. Frequently there are obstacles to the purchase, especially if any considerable expenditure is involved. Almost always there is strong opposition to decision and action, to be overcome only by the most adroit persuasion and subtle suggestion. Canvassing provides a schooling in every step of the sale.

Canvassing is widely employed in certain lines. In general an article to be sold successfully house to house

must appeal to women, be capable of convincing and dramatic demonstration, be more conveniently purchased in the home, and be of equal or lower price than similar goods sold in the retail stores. If the article or company has a national reputation and a record of honest dealing, the salesman has an advantage. A convincing guarantee is almost necessary. Exclusiveness of construction, design, pattern, and so forth is helpful.

A strong proposition and an effective presentation are necessary because of the attitude of the customer. Hostility, lack of interest, impatience, disbelief, fear, and hesitation are encountered in almost every sale.

To meet this difficult sales situation, canvassers usually resort to one of four devices. They may whine, appealing to the customer's pity, the purchase becoming a form of charity. They may lie or make use of some form of trickery to win the confidence of the prospect. They may build up a clever, hard-to-get-around sales talk that smothers resistance. Lastly, they may appeal through a winning, alert personality. It is not hard to select the most desirable of these four methods. Unfortunately many canvassers are poorly trained, and house-to-house selling is frequently unnecessarily difficult because unscrupulous and over-aggressive salesmen have brought the whole profession into disrepute.

Maintaining the selling attitude is one of the most difficult problems of the house-to-house salesman. He is subject to constant resistance, even insults. It is easy for him to become discouraged. In fact a great many men quit after a week or two of fruitless effort. Usually the canvasser is working on a commission basis, which may not add to his peace of mind if he is not being very successful. Physically the work is tiring, especially if heavy samples have to be carried. It is not to be wondered that the ordinary canvasser needs constant inspiration, incentives in the form of competitions and extra bonuses, friendly advice and reassurance. In addition, if he is to survive in

the business, he must form for himself the necessary habits of optimism, enthusiasm, courage, and industry.

Selling to the Independent Retailer.

According to the Census of Business there are in the United States approximately 1,770,000 retail stores (see Table 7), and of these about 93 per cent are of the independ-

TABLE 7
RETAIL TRADE, SHOWING NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS, SALES, AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, 1939

Kind of business	Number of stores	Total sales (add 000)	Number of employees*
Food group	560,549	$10,164,967	798,462
General stores (with food)	39,688	810,342	60,701
General-merchandise group	50,267	5,665,007	867,007
Apparel group	106,959	3,258,772	388,737
Furniture-household-radio group	52,827	1,733,257	213,635
Automotive group	60,132	5,548,687	389,298
Filling stations	241,858	2,822,495	235,527
Lumber-building group	39,667	1,761,205	169,799
Hardware group	39,646	973,709	82,497
Eating places	169,792	2,135,020	594,648
Drinking places	135,594	1,385,032	212,235
Drugstores	57,903	1,562,502	189,403
Liquor stores (packaged goods)	19,136	586,351	25,676
Other retail stores	172,375	3,496,437	349,792
Secondhand stores	23,962	138,007	22,800
United States total	1,770,355	$42,041,790	4,600,217

* The 1,613,673 proprietors of unincorporated businesses are not included. Source: "Retail Trade," Census of Business: 1939, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ent type. These independent stores probably handle about 75 per cent of the entire retail sales volume. Calling upon them day by day is a vast army of salesmen, representing jobbers and manufacturers. Selling to these retailers is an extremely important occupation.

Most of these independent stores are relatively small.[1] The proprietor usually works in the store, frequently con-

[1] More than 54 per cent of all retail stores in the United States in 1939

cerning himself with every operation from opening goods to tying up packages. In many cases he has little idea of business methods. He is frequently found to be conservative, unprogressive, afraid of change. Usually everything he owns is tied up in the store. He is fearful of competition, worried about the encroachment of the chains, the department stores, and others who threaten his business. This is, of course, a general picture; there are many exceptions.

In general the retail merchant is not a very good purchaser, a fact evident to anyone who has ever assisted in taking inventory and noted the quantities of shelfworn, unsalable goods to be found in the average store. Such costly mistakes make the retailer wary of any new or unusual proposal. He is likely to meet the strange salesman with suspicion and chronic resistance.

A first rule for the salesman selling to the retailer is to cultivate a sympathetic understanding of the dealer's problems and point of view. Everything possible must be done to reduce resistance. The salesman should strive to convince the dealer that he does not have to be afraid of being overstocked. The salesman must know his line, must know what the retailer can sell, must be able to suggest effective sales plans, must be able to advise on display and arrangement of stock.

All this means that the man selling to retailers must be thoroughly trained for his work. In many lines he is becoming a merchandising counselor. Some companies give their salesmen special courses in store accounting, delivery problems, store layout, retail sales methods, and kindred subjects, in order that the salesman may be able to pass this information on to the dealer.

In general there are two types of salesmen calling on retailers. On the one hand there is the representative of the wholesaler, who calls at frequent intervals to take orders for whatever items the storekeeper may need to replenish

did less than $10,000 of business. The average sales, for all stores, was $23,748.

his stock. There may be hundreds of items in the wholesaler's line, so that the salesman finds it impossible to do much aggressive selling on any one article. His chief interest is to build up a cordial, permanent relationship with the retailer as a basis for repeat orders.

A second type of salesman approaches the retailer with but one article or line—a specialty. He may represent a manufacturer selling direct to retailers, or he may be a so-called "missionary salesman," employed by a manufacturer who sells through wholesalers but uses his own sales force to supplement the efforts of the wholesaler's salesmen. More aggressive salesmanship is commonly practiced by these specialty men, who usually encounter more resistance from the retailer.

Like all traveling salesmen, the man selling to retailers has the personal problem of maintaining the selling attitude in the face of conditions that are sometimes discouraging. There is a temptation to concentrate on a few friendly dealers, taking the easy orders and avoiding the more difficult work of opening up new connections. There is a tendency to relapse into the familiar routine of calls, taking the accustomed business. Sometimes, away from home and the home office, the salesman falls a prey to worry and discouragement. These must be combatted vigorously.

Selling to Wholesalers.

According to data presented in the Census of Business, there are in the United States slightly more than 200,000 wholesalers. They buy in large lots, reselling the goods in smaller quantities to individual retailers. Their sales in 1939 were over 55 billion dollars. A considerable portion of the goods that eventually find their way to the consuming public passes through the hands of these middlemen.

The wholesaler (or jobber) serves both the manufacturer and the retailer. For manufacturers he provides a convenient and sometimes necessary avenue of distribution.

His sales force reaches scattered outlets that could not be cultivated economically by the individual producer. On the other hand he makes it possible for the retailer to purchase goods from many different sources through one clearing house, thus saving time and making prompt delivery possible. Frequently he extends credit, advises the retailer in the operation of his business, guides him in wise buying.

TABLE 8
WHOLESALE TRADE, SHOWING NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS, SALES, AND EMPLOYEES*

Types of operation	Number of establishments	Sales (add 000)	Number of employees (full-time and part-time), average for year
Service and limited-function wholesalers	101,627	$23,641,924	932,992
Manufacturers' sales branches (with stocks)	12,977	8,846,940	265,602
Manufacturers' sales offices (without stocks)	5,119	4,679,262	48,739
Petroleum bulk stations and terminals	30,825	3,807,908	99,236
Agents and brokers	20,903	11,201,035	78,511
Assemblers (mainly farm products)	29,122	3,088,571	137,041
Total	200,573	$55,265,640	1,562,121

* Source: "Wholesale Trade," Census of Business: 1939, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Salesmen representing manufacturers, manufacturers' agents, and other middlemen call on the wholesaler, seeking to induce him to stock his warehouse with goods of every description. If he is to stay in business, he has to be a wise purchaser, and salesmen find him a cautious and informed buyer. Since he buys to resell, he has to be convinced that such sale can be effected without too much effort. It is usually difficult to get him to consider a product until demand has been created. Moreover, he not only wishes to be sure that he can dispose of the goods to the retail

trade but also wants to be reasonably sure that it can in turn sell to the consumers, else he will soon lose his market.

Price and the possibilities of profit are, of course, also primary considerations with the wholesaler. They do not, however, constitute the only buying motives. He wants to know something of the financial condition of the manufacturer. He wants to be sure that goods will be delivered as promised. He wants to be sure that repeat orders can be filled, for the wholesale business is founded on repeat business. He wants to know whether or not the manufacturer sells only through wholesalers, what advertising is contemplated, and the policy on price protection, resale price, selling assistance.[1]

Of the principles of selling, perhaps the two that apply with most force in dealing with wholesalers are those of preparation and favorable classification. The salesman is here dealing with an expert buyer and must know values, business conditions, and trade technicalities. He must also be adroit in bringing out the favorable elements in his offering, emphasizing advantages and minimizing prejudices and doubts. Most important, he must by repeated demonstrations of reliability build up respect for himself and his company.

The characteristic qualities of the modern wholesale salesman are well brought out in the following quotation from a report of a special committee of the National Wholesale Druggists' Association:

> A salesman now must not alone be able to understand and present his merchandise attractively and convincingly, but he must have a personality and mental training that will enable him to meet his customer on a plane so as to understand his problems and command his respect and confidence, that while a salesman for the wholesaler, he becomes a buyer for the retailer. . . .
>
> The salesman of the present and the future must be a man of good mentality and with such experience and training that he has a real

[1] BECKMAN, T. N. and N. H. ENGLE, "Wholesaling," The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1937.

background. Through him we must render real service to the retailer. . . . The salesman must help him to pass his merchandise to the consumer, balance his item turnover, reduce his buying expense, increase his selling power, and keep him abreast of his business finances. This program calls for a real man, one who is in possession of basic principles in regard to financing a business, proper quantities, proper credit limitations, and proper expense in the different channels of distribution.[1]

Selling to the Professional Buyer.

Department stores, chain stores, voluntary chains, buying associations, and mail-order houses employ professional buyers who specialize in the purchasing of a single line or a few related lines. These buyers are men of experience. They have expert knowledge of sources of supply, prices, values, market conditions, trends. They buy in large quantities and expect the lowest possible quotation.

These buyers are usually systematic in their reception of salesmen. Most organizations provide a display room where at specified hours the salesman may present his goods. The sales talk is usually brief, centering around qualities, workmanship or finish of the goods, styles, colors, prices, deliveries, terms and discounts. The buyer judges these, considers the stock on hand, present demands, market conditions, and his budget for goods of this kind. Purchases are usually based upon these rational considerations rather than on emotional appeals as in some other types of buying.

The salesman selling to professional buyers should be an expert in his line if he is to deal successfully with these capable individuals. He must know his proposition; know the state of the market, the buying policy of the store or chain; he must be familiar with trade customs as to discounts, delivery, and the like. He should have authority to complete large deals. In fact some companies do not feel that the ordinary salesman can be expected to conduct sales

[1] Report of Committee on Salesmen and Selling Methods of National Wholesale Druggists' Association, *Printers' Ink*, Jan. 10, 1929, p. 108.

of the importance common in this field and entrust the work of selling to the large buyers to a partner or major officer of the firm.

Selling to Purchasing Agents.

Another type of professional buyer is the purchasing agent who handles the purchases for a large company or institution. He is in the market for equipment, supplies, raw materials, and partly finished goods to be used in production. He buys these on the requisition of the different departments, dealing with jobbers' salesmen and manufacturers' representatives. In many cases he has had engineering experience and buys with an expert knowledge. He may buy by brand or by specification. He is interested in securing goods that will meet a certain standard of quality, at a low price, with delivery and service assured.

In selling to the purchasing agent, appeals to reason are important. The salesman must show some gain of utility from the use of his product. He must demonstrate performance. If possible he must show that profit will result from the purchase, through either economy or increased production. Convenience and speed of service are useful talking points. Sometimes an engineering experience is useful to the salesman, enabling him to present a technical analysis of present methods and proof of economies to be brought about by the installation of his machines or service. The demonstration and the test are common. Testimonials in the form of data from satisfied users are also important. In general the appeals used are rational, although the personal element plays a part. Occasionally salesmen try to make use of gifts and other inducements to influence purchasers, although this practice is universally condemned. The following "Code of Ethics" drawn up by a committee sponsored by the National Association of Purchasing Agents suggests ideals for buyers and sellers.

CODE OF ETHICS[1]

First.—To buy and sell on the basis of *value*, recognizing that value represents that combination of quality, service, and price which assures greatest ultimate economy to the user.

Second.—To respect our obligations and neither expressly nor impliedly to promise a performance which we cannot reasonably expect to fulfill.

Third.—To avoid misrepresentation and sharp practice in our purchases and sales, recognizing that permanent business relations can be maintained only on a structure of honesty and fair dealing.

Fourth.—To be courteous and considerate to those with whom we deal, to be prompt and businesslike in our appointments, and to carry on negotiations with all reasonable expedition so as to avoid trespassing on the rights of others to the time of buyers and salesmen.

Fifth.—To avoid statements tending to injure or discredit a legitimate competitor and to divulge no information acquired in confidence with the intent of giving or receiving an unfair advantage in a competitive business transaction.

Sixth.—To strive for simplification and standardization within the bounds of utility and industrial economy and to further the development of products and methods which will improve industrial efficiency.

Seventh.—To recognize that character is the greatest asset in commerce and to give it major consideration in the selection of customers and sources of supply.

Eighth.—To adjust claims and settle disputes on the basis of facts and fairness, to submit the facts to arbitration if a mutual agreement cannot be reached, to abide by the decision of the arbiters, and to resort to legal measures in commercial disputes only when the preceding courses prove ineffective.

Ninth.—To provide or accept no gifts or entertainment in the guise of sales expense, where the intent or effect is to unduly prejudice the recipient in favor of the donor as against legitimate competitors.

Tenth.—To give or receive no bribes, in the form of money or otherwise, in any commercial transaction and to expose commercial bribery wherever encountered for the purpose of maintaining the highest standard of ethics in American industry.

Summary.

One great group of salesmen is composed of those who solicit business. Sales direct to consumers, to retailers,

[1] A New Code of Ethics for Buying and Selling, *The Purchasing Agent*, October, 1928, p. 1148.

to wholesalers, to professional buyers, and to purchasing agents are characteristic forms of this type of selling. The special problems of salesmen in this group center around finding, approaching, and interesting the possible purchaser. Conviction, persuasion, and closing the sale are also important but are, of course, found also in other types of selling to be discussed in the next chapter.

Questions and Exercises

1. In selling of the soliciting type, what are the characteristic steps in the sale?
2. Criticize the *attention-interest-desire-confidence-decision-action* theory of the sale.
3. Suppose that a life insurance agent is calling on you to interest you in his insurance plan. Write out what you believe to be an effective introduction to be used by him in beginning the interview.
4. Draw a chart showing the channels through which goods commonly pass on their way to the consumer.
5. List the chief characteristics of the retail buyer, the wholesale buyer, and the purchasing agent.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER XVII

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES IN RETAIL SELLING

It is estimated that there are in the United States slightly more than two million men and women engaged in retail selling.[1] This great army handles all but a small portion of the billions of dollars worth of goods sold annually to consumers. Although not the most spectacular, this branch of selling is of the greatest importance, both to manufacturers, who want their products vended efficiently, and to the public, which wants to be served intelligently.

In terms of the analysis given in the preceding chapter, the chief characteristics of retail selling arise from the fact that the customer seeks the salesman—or rather the goods—that the customer is buying for consumption, and that the salesman, although interested in the sale of one particular article is, or should be, interested in establishing patrons who will continue to buy the whole line of goods offered by the house. These three considerations should be kept in mind in our study of the work of the retail salesperson.

Buying Attitudes of Retail Customers.

In outlining the nine principles of selling we stressed the importance of the buying attitude. In retail selling we find that the buying attitude is ordinarily established to some degree when the customer enters the store. The customer has a want or a need or a desire and seeks a solution. Guided by the store's advertising, by its location, by the comments of friends, or by his own previous experiences, he of his own initiative goes to the store as the most likely and convenient place to find satisfaction.

[1] See Chap. I. Retail stores in 1939 employed approximately 4,600,000 people, of whom about 48 per cent were engaged in selling.

This fact greatly simplifies the task of the retail salesman. Unlike the house-to-house canvasser and other salesmen who approach the customer, the salesperson does not have to overcome initial inertia. In that respect his work is easier. It would be a mistake to conclude, however, that there is not opportunity for real salesmanship in the retail store. We shall find the contrary to be true.

The first thing to realize is that the customer comes into the retail store with a problem. It is of the greatest importance that the retail salesman keep this point firmly in mind—that he visualize every customer as presenting a difficulty that must be solved. Thus the woman coming in to buy a rug should not be thought of as "just another customer." She should be seen, let us say, as an ambitious homemaker with a 12 by 15-ft. living room finished in cream with walnut furniture and yellow draperies. Her income is limited. She wants to find a durable rug that will harmonize with her ensemble, will look expensive, yet will fall within the restrictions of her budget. It is the business of the store to satisfy this woman's wants as quickly and satisfactorily as possible.

Types of Buying Attitude.

Of course the buying attitude is not equally strong in all retail customers. There are four elements that determine the customer's state of mind. These are:

1. Urgency of the want.
2. Specificity of the want.
3. Customer's intention as to its satisfaction.
4. Customer's standards of satisfaction.

These four factors may be present in different degrees and in different combinations, making possible a variety of buying attitudes. The most common types in retail stores are the following:

TYPICAL RETAIL BUYING ATTITUDES

1. *The Quick Buyer.*—This customer intends to make an immediate purchase of a specific, accepted article; for

example, the man who enters a drugstore and asks for a tube of a specific brand of toothpaste.

2. *The Inspector.*—This customer intends to make an immediate purchase of a specific article if it meets a certain standard of value; for example, a woman enters a store to look at dish towels that she has seen advertised at bargain prices and that she will buy if they prove to be what she wants.

3. *The Shopper.*—This customer hopes to satisfy a want by immediate purchase but is not decided as to the specific article or standards of value; for example, a woman who goes into a store to look at coats without much idea of what kind of coat she wants.

4. *The Future Buyer.*—This customer has a general want that will be satisfied some time in the future if a satisfactory article can be found. Thus a woman who intends to buy an oil stove for her summer camp might stop for a moment to look at stoves without any immediate intention of buying.

5. *The Looker.*—This customer has no intention of buying but has some degree of desire for or interest in the goods. Thus a woman may stop to admire a gown that she has no idea of purchasing.

Fostering the Buying Attitude.

In handling all of these types the most important single rule in retail selling is: *Foster and intensify the buying attitude.* The buying mood of the customer may be thought of as a tiny flame. Poor selling quenches this flame. Many a customer has entered a store with a clear intention of buying, only to meet indifference, inefficiency, and discourtesy, and has departed with her purchasing mood completely extinguished. Good selling, on the other hand, shields and fosters the flame, carrying the customer through to a satisfactory conclusion of the sale.

It should be remembered that the buying attitude is impulsive. That is, like other behavior patterns, it tends

to push through to its goal—satisfaction. The customer entering a store is somewhat like a hungry man entering a restaurant. He wants to satisfy his wants as quickly as possible. He does not want to be delayed, and he does not want to be distracted.

Based upon this analysis we may lay down a number of suggestions that if followed by the salesman or saleswoman would do much to prevent the loss of the buying attitude.[1]

TO FOSTER THE BUYING ATTITUDE

1. Be alert to notice the approaching customer.
2. Discontinue all nonselling activities as soon as you see a customer approaching. Care of stock must wait. Above all do not keep a customer standing while you finish gossiping with other salespeople.
3. If you cannot attend to the customer's wants immediately, let her know that she will be served as soon as possible.
4. Approach the customer quickly. Convey by your manner your interest in her interests and your willingness to serve.
5. Do not wait for the customer to speak. Ask at once how you can serve her.
6. If it is near the closing hour, do not indicate by your manner that you are in a hurry to get away.
7. Get down to business at once. Remember that the customer wants action.
8. Find out, with as few questions as possible, exactly what the customer's problem is. Keep that problem in mind.
9. Know your stock so thoroughly that you need not hesitate an instant in finding the right goods.
10. Show enough goods to afford a sufficiently broad selection, but not enough to be confusing.
11. Do not give the impression that you are conferring a favor by waiting on the customer.
12. Be ready with information. Answer questions without hesitation.
13. Keep the sale moving. Do not let the customer feel that you have lost interest.

[1] The suggestions in this and following paragraphs are derived from many sources. The student desiring a more complete background of information in the field of retail selling should consult some of the representative retail textbooks listed at the end of this chapter.

14. Remember that the looker and the shopper are just as important to the store as the quick buyer. Do not kill whatever buying attitude they have by impatience or indifference.

15. Be sure that you can supply the goods before displaying a sample.

16. In handling mechanical details, such as wrapping and making change, move quickly and efficiently.

17. After completing the sale and while the customer is in the buying mood, suggest other purchases.

18. If the customer does not buy, lay the foundation for future sales by impressing her with your helpful businesslike attitude.

The Selling Attitude in Retail Selling.

Perhaps more than other salesmen the employees of retail stores need to strive to maintain the selling attitude every minute. Since a certain percentage of sales is practically automatic, the customer simply requiring a branded article that is readily supplied, there is a strong temptation for the salesperson to fall into the habit of handling all customers in this easy, effortless fashion. The ambitious salesman must resist this temptation vigorously, for there is not much chance of advancement for the mere order taker.

As we have previously noted, the basis of the selling attitude is energetic concentration on the task of effecting the sale. The following suggestions will be found helpful in achieving this goal in the retail store.

TO MAINTAIN THE SELLING ATTITUDE

1. Refuse to be a mere order taker.

2. Do not be content to be "an average clerk."

3. Make every sale an opportunity to practice concentration upon selling.

4. Remember that concentration depends in part upon physical condition. Keep physically fit by proper exercise, correct diet, sufficient sleep.

5. Be alert to see approaching customers.

6. Take the initiative; push the sale. Take an active not a passive interest.

7. Lean forward, and listen carefully to the questions, comments, and requests of the customer. Follow them up promptly

8. Watch the customer's appearance, expression, action. Try to interpret them and to use your conclusions in adapting your talk to the situation.

9. Be calm and concentrated, not hurried and harassed.

10. Do not fall into a daydream between sales.

11. Relax occasionally, but do not allow yourself to lean indolently against the counter or case or shelves.

12. Do not bring your personal difficulties into the store. Dismiss your own problems from your mind during working hours.

13. Vary the sales talk from customer to customer. Do not become mechanical.

14. Fight against the attitude of indifference.

15. Move energetically but not nervously.

16. Do not lose interest when the customer seems ready to go out without buying.

17. Continue to show interest in the customer after the sale is completed.

18. Do not show disappointment at losing a sale.

19. Study your sales to learn your strength and weakness. Strive constantly for improvement.

Avoiding Customer Resistance.

In our discussion of the nine principles of selling we noted that the interests of the salesman and the customer sometimes clash and an attitude of hostility develops. This is not so likely to occur in retail selling as in other more aggressive forms, but the principle is nevertheless worthy of close attention. The good salesman builds acceptance for himself and his store.

Customers develop resistance when they feel that they are being urged to do something that they do not want to do or are being held back from something that they want. Resistance indicates a conflict of personalities. The obvious remedy is for the salesman to guide the sale so sympathetically that the customer is not conscious of the guidance.

The one basic rule is to see things from the customer's side of the counter. Consult the customer's convenience in every way. Place goods within easy reach. Provide a seat if the sales situation allows it. Speak clearly and dis-

tinctly but not too loudly. Avoid all appearance of dictating what shall be bought or how it is to be bought. Do not argue. Do not assume an air of superiority in giving information. Make your statements positive, yet get the customer to agree as frequently as possible.

A great source of resistance is the salesman's own desire to demonstrate superiority. Avoid the pitying smile, the sarcastic smile, the knowing smile. Sometimes salespeople, exasperated by a customer, show their contempt by raised eyebrows and rolling eyes—an expression that is pretty sure to be observed and interpreted and resented. Sometimes salespeople stare coldly at customers, answering questions in a distant, haughty voice.

Do not make the customer feel that if she examines the goods, she is obligated to buy. Do not pester the customer who is "just looking around." On the other hand, do not give the impression—as is frequently done—that "lookers" are not welcome.

Remember that customers are sensitive. If the customer has any physical defect, any exceptional point of appearance, any language difficulty, take care not to make any reference to it or seem to see it. It is especially bad taste for store employees to whisper and laugh among themselves, for some customer is likely to notice the conference and to conclude that her own appearance or manner or taste is being ridiculed.

A good formula for putting customers at ease is to assume the attitude of the tactful host or hostess. Attentive courtesy and helpfulness will do much to break down the negative attitude of even the most irritable caller.

Inducing Favorable Classification by Meeting Standards.

The quick customer who asks for a specific article presents no problem except that of service. In his case most of the steps of the sale have occurred before he enters the store. On the basis of advertised merits, comments of friends, or his own previous experience he has been able to decide that

the article meets his standards of value and will satisfy his want.

Most retail customers, however, have not arrived at any such definite decision. They want to see the goods and, in the light of certain preconceived *standards,* decide whether they are satisfactory or not. Among these standards that the customer has more or less clearly in mind during the progress of the sale the following are likely to be important:

CUSTOMER'S STANDARDS OF VALUE

1. *Price.*—"Is this price reasonable as compared with that of other stores, and is it about the amount that I should spend?"

2. *Quality.*—"Is this article of the quality that I want, and is its quality as high as represented?"

3. *Appearance.*—"Is this article attractive enough to satisfy my pride?"

4. *Durability.*—"Will this article stand up under the wear that it is likely to receive?"

5. *Fashionableness.*—"Is this article in the mode, so that I will be proud, or at least not ashamed, to own it?"

6. *Comfort and Convenience.*—"Does this article promise satisfaction from the point of comfort and convenience?"

7. *Health.*—"Will this article be safe, sanitary, hygienic, healthful?"

8. *Guarantee and Return Privilege.*—"Will I be protected in case this article does not measure up to my expectations?"

It should be noted that these are simply standard expressions adopted to facilitate thinking about the central problem of the customer: "Will this article satisfy my wants." Each standard has behind it one or more of the wants that we discussed in Chapter VII.

In most retail sales the customer's mental processes hinge on the business of measuring the satisfactions promised by the goods, in terms of these and similar standards.

It is a sizing-up and evaluating process. Goods are classified, accepted, or rejected as they meet or fail to meet these specifications.

The work of the salesman is to show that his goods meet the standards. To do that he directs attention to the acceptable features and helps the customer see that these are right as to price, quality, appearance, and so on. That he may do this effectively, the salesman should know his goods thoroughly and practice expressing his knowledge clearly and convincingly.

Inducing Favorable Classification of Self.

Not only must the salesman guide the customer to make a favorable classification of the goods, but he should also so conduct himself that his person and manner will be received favorably. In theory the sole interest of the customer is to buy satisfactory goods, but in practice his appraisal of these goods is likely to be influenced by the personality of the salesperson.

Rules for inducing favorable classification involve dress, manner, and language. The following suggestions are taken from the practice of the best retail stores:

TO ENCOURAGE FAVORABLE CLASSIFICATION

1. Make your manner suggest energy and alertness. Stand erect. Do not lean.
2. Avoid nervous, uncertain, exaggerated gestures. Do not fidget, but do not stand stiff and aloof.
3. Cultivate a pleasant facial expression.
4. Be sincere, unaffected.
5. Keep the hands clean, nails well cared for.
6. While in the store avoid gum chewing, eating candy, loud talking, manicuring the nails, arranging the hair, attending to personal details.
7. Avoid excessive use of cosmetics. Avoid jewelry and any flashy adornment. Avoid extremes in style of hairdressing.
8. Dress neatly, prosperously, becomingly. Avoid extreme styles in dress.
9. Avoid the odor of strong perfume, tobacco, offensive breath.
10. Speak clearly, employing a good vocabulary, correct English.

11. Avoid commonplace, meaningless descriptive words, such as fine, elegant, wonderful, awfully, cute, sweet, dandy, swell, classy.

12. Do not use the word "cheap" in speaking of goods.

13. Do not address a woman as "Lady." Say "Madam." Do not address a man as "Mister." Say "Sir." Do not use the expression "gent."

14. Do not be overfamiliar in addressing the customer. Avoid such salutations as "Old Man" and "Dearie," "Doc," "Jack."

15. Do not try to be witty.

16. Remember that a poorly kept stock makes a bad impression.

17. Do not throw merchandise down in front of the customer. Present the merchandise in such a way as to enhance its value.

18. If obliged to interrupt the sale, be sure to say "Please excuse me," to the customer.

19. Use "Please" and "Thank you," whenever appropriate.

20. Give the impression that you enjoy your work.

Dramatizing the Article in the Retail Sale.

Because of the nature of the retail sale there is perhaps less need of dramatic selling tactics than in other types of selling. Much of such dramatization as is desirable is accomplished by window displays, advertising, and other store activities rather than by the individual salesman. This does not mean, however, that the salesman should not make use of sensible and helpful devices for bringing out the distinctive qualities of the goods.

The greatest opportunity for dramatization is in the method of displaying the article to the customer. One fundamental rule is: *Handle the goods in such a way as to enhance rather than detract from their appeal.* Thus a piece of cloth may be attractively draped to show how it will appear when made up. A necktie may be looped to give an idea of its appearance when tied.

Many articles sold in retail stores lend themselves to effective *demonstrations.* Thus the cutting edge of a pair of scissors may be shown by snipping a bit of paper. A vacuum cleaner may be demonstrated on a rug littered with lint and white powder. The strength of bedsprings may be demonstrated by standing on them. A similar demon-

stration is used with a specially constructed bridge table. A manufacturer of lanterns tells retail salespeople to demonstrate the strength of the mantles by lighting the lantern, laying it on its side, and kicking it around.

Frequently the product may be dramatized by pointing out a special feature and giving interesting information about its construction or history or special advantages. Thus a pen salesman takes a pen apart and points out the special mechanism of the filling device. A salesman selling phonograph records tells something about the history of the composer of certain pieces of music. A rug salesman tells where the rug comes from, how it is made, something of the life of the weavers. A radio salesman found that many of his customers were interested in the spectacular career of the manufacturer of a certain set.

The retail salesman should cultivate the practical kind of imagination that evolves these novel and interesting sales presentations. He should study the literature supplied by manufacturers of the products that he sells. He should learn to make his talk dramatic, yet sensible. He should remember that no matter how commonplace his product may seem, there is a way of making it interesting.

Conviction in the Retail Sale.

The retail customer needs to be supplied with certain convictions; but in general, this phase of retail selling is simplified by the fact that today people have more confidence in stores and in well-known advertised brands and are less hesitant and suspicious than in times past. The guarantee and the "money-refunded" policy, along with better standards of business ethics, have done much to bring about this desirable state. Today, therefore, the problem of convincing the retail customer rests more upon the suitability of the goods and the advisability of purchase.

The retail salesman should ask himself: *What convictions does the customer already have that influence his purchase of my goods.* These convictions will, of course, vary from

product to product and from customer to customer. There are some general ideas, however, that may be expected to influence almost every one. Thus most women customers for shoes are said to believe that their foot is hard to fit. Many customers have the idea that "all wool" is always better than "mixed wool and cotton." Many men believe that $50 is enough to pay for a suit.

For every line there is a number of such customer beliefs that should be recognized and handled tactfully. Work with existing beliefs if possible; and if something must be said that runs counter to them, be sure to give a convincing explanation.

In fostering conviction the salesman's manner is important. He should never try to impress his claims by starting an argument. As far as possible the customer should be allowed to convince himself, through demonstration, handling the goods, trying on the garment. Answer questions without appearing to hesitate. Speak confidently and enthusiastically. Cultivate a sincere manner. Present the strongest selling talk first. Play up the guarantee, both of the manufacturer and the store, if that is possible.

Removing the Obstacle. Answering Objections.

Important characteristics of the successful salesman are the intelligence to appreciate the factors that keep customers from buying and the resourcefulness to find a way to overcome these obstacles. Sometimes the customer is conscious of a difficulty but hesitates to express it. In this case the salesman should try to guess what it is and remove it if possible. Sometimes the difficulty is given expression in the form of objections. These should receive the most careful study. The commonest objections met in selling a specific product should be analyzed, and a standard procedure for meeting the obstacle developed.

It is possible to make a general list of some of the most frequent objections encountered in retail selling. The following should be regarded as merely suggestive, to be

supplemented by others applying more specifically to the product being sold.

COMMON OBJECTIONS IN RETAIL SELLING

1. "That is not exactly what I want."—Show more goods and endeavor to get a more exact idea of the customer's problem and standards.

2. "I did not intend to pay that much."—Show that the higher priced article is worth more than the difference in cost, because of its better construction, appearance, and so on. Show less expensive merchandise.

3. "That is more than I can afford to pay."—Suggest charge or time payment, if in line with store policy. Show less expensive goods if available. Do not suggest by manner that you think the customer "cheap."

4. "I know where I can buy this same article for less."—Suggest that you also have less expensive merchandise. Keep informed as to comparative prices, and if possible show that your goods are of superior quality, better fit, and so on. Do not knock competitors' goods.

5. "I do not believe these goods quite meet my standard."—Find out what standard—quality, style, and so on—the customer has in mind. Show that the goods offer good values. Demonstrate qualities if possible. Mention any guarantee feature.

6. "I think I may be able to do better elsewhere."—Agree that it is a good thing to compare values. Suggest thorough inspection of the goods, so that the customer may know what your store offers. Demonstrate goods effectively. Avoid an antagonistic attitude. Suggest time saved by buying now, rather than shopping around.

7. "I want another member of my family to see the goods."—Agree that this is desirable. If store policy allows, suggest holding the article or sending it out for inspection.

Inducing Decision and Action.

As in other forms of selling, persuasion and suggestion may be used in the retail sale to guide the customer's action. Persuasion, however, is usually severely limited, since it is ordinarily not good business to make the customer feel that he is under pressure to buy. Suggestion, on the other hand, is more favored by retail authorities, although the term is usually employed in a somewhat restricted sense.

Suggestion is frequently used to help the customer make up his mind with regard to a purchase. Some salesmen suggest that it is time for decision by bringing out the sales book. Others suggest that decision is made by asking about delivery or some other detail. Some merely stop showing goods, place goods to one side, or begin to replace goods that have been rejected. It is well to note in this connection that these devices should not be used in such a way as to make the customer feel that he is being hurried.

In retail establishments the expression "suggestive selling" is ordinarily used to mean attempts to lead the customer to additional purchases by mentioning other articles of which he may be in need. Thus the druggist may suggest shaving cream to the man who has bought a package of razor blades; the shoe salesman may bring out hosiery after he has sold a pair of shoes. In most stores salespeople are trained not to say "Will that be all?" but to give the more positive suggestion, "Would you like to look at something else?" usually naming a specific article.

Within proper limits this is sound selling practice. Customers sometimes overlook purchases that they had intended to make or that they might conveniently make at the time. As a rule, every salesman should form the habit of using this variety of suggestion. It is well, however, not to be too persistent. Many customers resent any feeling of being urged to buy.

Preparation for Retail Selling.

The application of all these principles requires preparation and practice—the first and last principle of successful selling. The retail student should equip himself with adequate *knowledge* and serviceable *selling habits.*

As to knowledge, information about the stock is of primary importance. The salesman should know the location of goods, in order that he may give prompt service. He should watch new stock, stock on reserve, special stock. He should be familiar with prices. He should

have a general idea of stock in other departments, the location of goods throughout the store.

The salesman must master the routine of the store, of the department, and of the individual sale. The advertising should be studied from day to day. The store policies should be analyzed and understood.

In conducting the sale there is a constant demand for information about the goods, and a broad knowledge should be acquired. It is well to study the questions asked by customers, using these as a guide to the kind of information most likely to be useful.

This information may be secured from many sources. A careful inspection of the merchandise will yield suggestions. Manufacturers frequently supply literature that is helpful. Buyers and other salesmen may be consulted. In many lines merchandising manuals are available. The public library is frequently a mine of information to the salesman who will take the trouble to use it. Any salesman by a little effort can experience the satisfaction and receive the rewards of a specialist in the chosen line.

Important Sales Habits. Summary and Conclusion.

We have in this chapter noted a long list of rules for the retail salesman to observe. There is little to be gained from merely reading these rules or even by committing them to memory. The important thing is that they be put into practice.

There are so many rules that the salesman is in danger of suffering a kind of mental indigestion unless he picks out a few important points to begin practicing at once, adding others as the opportunity arises. Most retail salesmen will find it profitable to begin by practicing the following until they are natural, habitual, unconscious in operation.

SUGGESTED LIST OF BEGINNING SALES HABITS

1. As each customer approaches, practice thinking: "I am going to handle this sale quickly, courteously, satisfactorily."

2. As each customer approaches, practice thinking: "I am going to study this customer's problem and try to help solve it."

3. Note common reasons for failure to concentrate on selling, such as self-consciousness, daydreams, wandering interest, laziness, and practice overcoming them by resolute attention to business.

4. Every day consciously employ some or all of the principles of good selling.

Questions and Exercises

1. What are the chief characteristics of retail selling?
2. From your own experience give an illustration of a salesperson's failure to foster the buying attitude.
3. In what ways can the retail salesman express the selling attitude?
4. Analyze a recent purchase, showing how you were guided by your standards of value.
5. Describe some retail establishment in which many of the principles of good selling are violated.
6. How should the retail salesman handle the person who is "just looking around"?
7. What is meant by "suggestive selling"? Give examples.
8. What are the most important sales habits for the retail salesman to cultivate?

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CHAPTER XVIII

SALESMEN AND THEIR PROBLEMS

As was pointed out in earlier chapters, the chief difficulty in the application of sales principles arises from the salesman's inability to realize his own problems and to make habitual the use of better ways of handling sales situations. It is hard to translate preaching into practice. Probably the most effective way to meet this difficulty is through the analysis of problems encountered by typical salesmen and a study of methods that led to self-improvement. To that end this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of actual cases, interpreted in the light of the principles already discussed.[1]

A Case of Failure to Concentrate on Selling.

Martin L was an insurance agent, thirty-five years of age, married, of good appearance and pleasant manner. Before entering the insurance business he had been secretary to a charitable organization. He had the reputation of being a hard worker and gave every indication of energy and ambition. He had been given a thorough course of instruction by the insurance company and seemed equipped to make a good record. Nevertheless, his sales ran consistently low. Here is his story of his difficulty:

My trouble is that I cannot close the sale on the first or second call. I call on my prospects again and again. I have worked out a wonderful system of prospecting. I have little trouble in getting an interview. Nor do I meet any difficulty on my return calls. I have made as many as 20 calls on a prospect before I sold a policy, and I do not believe I was considered a pest. On the average I have to call eight or ten times

[1] The cases here presented are based upon the experiences of real salesmen. For obvious reasons the names have been changed, and in some instances unimportant details have been altered to prevent identification.

before I can make a sale. That is too many. It takes too much effort. I know that I am putting in more hours than most salesmen. I am on the job all the time, but I do not make money because it takes me too long to place a policy.

A careful study was made of this man's case. The obvious thing to do was to tell him to try harder to close his sales on the first or second call; but since he was quite intelligent and fully conscious of his difficulty, this prescription, like many given by well-meaning sales counselors, would have merely suggested a remedy which he had tried and found impracticable. The important thing was to discover the specific cause of his difficulty, and after several interviews it became clear. His great trouble was that he was so pleasant and adaptable that he followed every conversational lead of the person with whom he was talking. If the prospect chose to talk about something other than insurance, *L* would throw himself enthusiastically into a discussion of whatever subject was mentioned. This meant a lively and interesting conversation but not the sale of insurance.

Curiously enough, *L* had never recognized this trait in his personality. When it was called to his attention, he at once agreed that therein was the cause of his failure to make more sales and resolved to correct his methods at once.

A week later, however, he reported that he had not succeeded in altering his manner of handling the interview. He would start out bravely, with the determination to concentrate on the sale, but after a few minutes' conversation the customer would make an observation that would start an irrelevant train of thought. This, *L* would follow with great interest for the next half hour. Then he would suddenly realize that he was likely to outstay his welcome, would feel that it was unwise to spend more time elaborating the insurance plan at that interview, and would depart with a pleasant promise to call again. As he expressed it, he simply could not keep the conversation centered on the subject of insurance.

It was pointed out to him that to overcome his difficulty he must acquire two habits. First, he needed to learn to recognize the moment at which the conversation was getting away from the subject. Second, he needed to form the habit of reacting to that recognition by a vigorous and continued attempt to turn it back to the main topic. He was shown that these habits could be acquired only by practice, that resolution alone would not be sufficient. He was instructed to reconstruct an interview mentally, picturing to himself the moment at which a temptation arose to talk about extraneous matters, and to visualize himself holding determinedly to the matter in hand. He was told to get his wife and others to practice with him, trying to distract him from the main topic of conversation. He was required to keep a record of his successes and failures for a period of several weeks, until he had achieved the new habit of concentration.

Under this systematic effort he was able to report a definite improvement in his selling. He began to make sales with fewer calls. He is no longer at the bottom of his group in sales. He does report occasional relapses into the old habit but is convinced that by continued effort he will overcome this weakness in his method.

This salesman's case is a good illustration of failure due to lack of concentration. There are many forms in which this difficulty is encountered. In most cases the methods that here proved effective may be used to correct the situation. The essential thing is a clear understanding of the problem and a systematic plan of reeducation.

Another Type of Sales Failure.

Another type of failure to concentrate is well illustrated by the case of Conrad *V*. This salesman's problem received special attention because of a discussion as to whether or not he should be discharged. He was employed by a company selling a specialty, house to house. For several months his sales record had not been good, and at

the time of the discussion sales had dropped so low that the sales manager felt it was hopeless to continue to carry *V* on the force. It was suggested that an interview with this salesman might be worth while in order to determine, if possible, the cause of his loss of efficiency and to discover a remedy.

V proved to be an impressive gentleman of middle age, well dressed, and of polished manner. He took charge of the interview at once by saying that he realized that his sales were low. This, he said, was due to the fact that he had been devoting considerable effort to finding another position. He explained that he was accustomed to a much greater income than he was able to make in his present connection, which he had taken up temporarily because he happened to be out of work and nothing better offered.

Further inquiry brought out the story of a most interesting career. *V* was quite willing to talk about his experiences and apparently proud of the number of companies for which he had worked and the variety of products that he had sold. He declared that he had sold everything from toothpicks to elephants. He named more than twenty organizations for which he had worked, many of them very well known. He had averaged less than a year in any one position. In each case the history of his connection with a company followed a regular pattern. He would secure a position on the strength of his excellent appearance and persuasive manner. For the first few weeks he would throw himself enthusiastically into his work and make a very good impression. Then his sales would begin to lag. Then he would seek another position, usually just in time to avoid dismissal, and the whole cycle would be repeated.

After listening to the interesting story of *V*'s exploits as a salesman for many companies, the interviewer ventured to suggest that this roving life could not have been very satisfactory from the point of view of permanent success. *V* was quick to admit this. He said:

I know that is true. I have been a rolling stone. After I have been selling a proposition for a few months, I seem to lose all interest in it. And you cannot sell a thing if you are not interested in it. Anyway, I cannot. But I am going to settle down. If the proposition I am now investigating turns out as I expect it to, I have something good, something that will give a real salesman a chance to show what is in him. No more of this house-to-house peddling. What I want is something big. When I find the right article, I will show you what a real salesman can do.

Since *V* was leaving the organization of his own choice, and since his long history indicated that a reformation would be extremely difficult, no attempt was made to deal with his problem. He passed on to other fields and by this time has probably held half a dozen different positions.

There is some doubt as to how much can be done for salesmen of this type. The principal difficulty is that they usually do not think that anything should be done. They are willing to admit that they have changed positions frequently, but they give a convincing explanation of each move. They are sure that the future is going to be different. The sound advice—that they achieve a success in one line before going on to the next—they accept as generally true, but they can advance a dozen good reasons why it should not apply in the present case. They continue as floaters and drifters, detested by sales managers who wish to build a permanent organization. Perhaps the most constructive use of cases of this kind is to employ them as illustrations to show younger salesmen the evils of failure to concentrate on selling.

A Handicapping Personality.

Henry *C* was interviewed just after he had lost his position as salesman for a manufacturer of factory equipment. He had been employed to call on purchasing agents, not with the idea of effecting immediate sales but to establish cordial contacts that might lead to future business. After a year of this work his employer had become dissatisfied

with the results and had dismissed *C* without any explanation, except that his work had not been satisfactory.

In talking with *C* it soon became apparent that he did not clearly realize the cause of his difficulty. He was a colorless individual, talking sparingly and smiling infrequently. He had formerly been a bookkeeper, had been regarded as successful in this work, but had left it because he felt that he could make more money by selling. His reputation for industry had been the principal factor in securing his chance at sales work.

It was evident that he had worked hard at his new position, making many calls and patiently following up leads. It was equally clear that he was so reserved, so unenthusiastic, with so little capacity for making friends that he was very poorly equipped for soliciting business.

C's own idea was that he had not succeeded in selling because of lack of training. His employer had merely given him a week at the factory, had provided some general instructions, and had sent him out without supervision or encouragement. *C* had heard of another and larger company in the same line that had a training school for its men. He felt that if he could secure a position with this company he might be able to do better work. He also thought of giving up selling and returning to his former work as a bookkeeper.

Tests showed that *C* was above average in intelligence. On introversion-extroversion tests he was scored as decidedly introvert. On Allport's test for ascendancy-submissiveness he scored as normal, or average. Discussion revealed that he was inclined to be somewhat pessimistic at times, but he showed no signs of revolt against society or feeling of persecution.

Since *C* was intelligent and open-minded, it seemed sensible to try to give him a picture of himself and to show him the difficulties to be encountered in some types of selling by a man of his characteristics. An attempt was made to show him the probable effect of his cold manner

upon most of the people with whom he had to deal. It was discovered that his father had exhibited the same cold attitude, and by thinking in terms of his father's handicaps he was better able to visualize his own. He agreed that in types of selling in which friendships were of great importance he would be sure to encounter serious obstacles.

As to whether or not it was possible for him to overcome this difficulty, it was pointed out that it usually takes years to bring about any marked modification of a pronounced trait such as the one in question. Doubtless such an effort at improvement was well worth while, but it was suggested that there was considerable doubt as to any complete reformation of his personality.

After considerable thought *C* decided to continue as a salesman and to make an effort to develop a more social manner. He worked first for a publishing company as a magazine solicitor, but a high-pressure sales manager soon dismissed him. He then worked in a department store and finally was moved into the jewelry department, where he has remained. He has conscientiously attempted to make friends and acquaintances and to take an interest in people apparently with some success. In his present position his work is regarded as satisfactory. He says that he likes it better than keeping books. Probably he will never be an exceptional success as a salesman, but he will be dependable and conscientious.

There are many such men selling goods today—men who are by nature somewhat handicapped for the work but who want to continue in it and are willing to make a sincere effort to overcome their limitations. For such men the important thing is that they be given a clear picture of the impression that they create and suggestions for a program of improvement. Frequently such men may profitably follow the method that Benjamin Franklin outlines in his autobiography. He tells of his own efforts as follows:

> It was about this time I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. . . . As I knew, or thought I knew, what

was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employ'd in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct.

To meet this difficulty Franklin made a catalogue of the thirteen virtues that seemed to him most important. In his list he included temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility. He was wise enough not to try to master all of these at once but established a scheme of practice by which he worked on them one at a time. He says:

I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul'd each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I cross'd these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

Franklin continued this systematic practice over a period of several years. He carried his little record with him wherever he went. He found that some elements in his personality were very hard to change but that his efforts were amply repaid. Of one habit he says:

In truth I found myself incorrigible with respect to order; and now that I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensibly the want of it. But, on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavor, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it; as those who aim at perfect writing by imi-

tating the engraved copies, tho' they never reach the wish'd-for excellence of those copies, their hand is mended by the endeavor, and is tolerable while it continues fair and legible.

It was by following methods such as these suggested by Franklin that *C* was able to make an improvement in his social attitude. Most salesmen could profitably borrow the idea in their attempt to develop a better selling personality.

Worry and Ill Health.

William *S* was about forty-five years of age, married, but with no children. Beginning as a garage mechanic, he had worked his way up in a large organization until he secured a desirable position as salesman in the used-car division. Sales were large, and for several years he made a good income. At the time of the first interview with him, however, he had suffered a marked drop in sales and, instead of leading his organization, was below the middle of the group in point of production. His manager said of him:

S has been one of our best salesmen but is now falling behind his record. He seems moody and some of the men complain that it is hard to get along with him. I have tried to help him by preaching enthusiasm and also by trying to scare him, but it does not seem to do much good. It is too bad, for he should be turning in a much bigger volume of sales.

In interviewing *S* the first thing observed was that he seemed to be in poor health. His skin was pale; his eyes slightly bloodshot; and his hands clammy to the touch. He seemed worried and ill at ease. At first he was not responsive to questions about his work but presently volunteered that he had not been feeling very well. He said that he was troubled by sleeplessness. He had not visited a doctor, although he had been urged to do so.

It took several interviews to piece together this salesman's story. He was reluctant to talk about his difficulties, but by degrees it was revealed that he was greatly

upset mentally by a number of troublesome fears and obsessions. He was afraid of losing his position. He was worried about his health. He had married a woman younger than he was and had become suspicious and jealous of her. Much of the time he was in a state of reverie, brooding over his supposed troubles. The result was that he did not keep his mind on selling, and his work had suffered.

In dealing with cases of this kind—and they are rather common among salesmen—it seems best to try to get the individual to view himself objectively, to see himself as others see him. Usually it is helpful if he can be brought to talk freely and calmly of his supposed difficulties. Frequently, as in this case, a physical condition will be found that should be corrected.

The foregoing plan was followed with *S*. It was explained to him that the body has a great deal to do with mental conditions and that he should consult a good physician for a thorough examination. He was urged to take up simple exercise as an aid in getting into better physical condition. His home situation was discussed sympathetically, and the foolishness of some of his ideas was tactfully brought out. He was assured that his fears of losing his position were groundless. He was persuaded to enter into a competition, then being organized among a group of salesmen. He was urged to keep his mind free of brooding reveries as much as possible, to throw himself into activities that would prevent such fruitless preoccupation.

S followed these simple suggestions and soon showed pronounced improvement in sales. An intelligent physician prescribed a regime of diet and exercise that helped him overcome his physical ailments. His home situation was satisfactorily adjusted. At last report *S* had managed to free himself of most of the obstacles that were reducing his sales efficiency.

In many ways this case pictures a situation that applies to many salesmen. Ill health and worry are the enemies

of selling efficiency. Frequently, rather simple measures are sufficient to overcome these hindrances. Scolding and preaching are rarely successful.

Morris *K*, a Difficult Case.

This salesman was a foreigner, who had been in the United States about ten years and in that time had tried half a dozen lines of selling. When first interviewed he was just starting to work as a salesman for a typewriter manufacturer. He was very enthusiastic about his new connection, insisted on giving a long and detailed narrative of his experiences in soliciting prospects, and asked repeatedly for advice as to how each situation should be handled. Finally, in response to his continued and rather wearisome demand for criticism, a study was made of the man and his selling methods.

Perhaps a chance conversation with one of his prospects gave the best picture of this salesman. Here is what this victim—a lawyer—said of *K*:

> When I knew this fellow he was trying to sell insurance. He saw my name on the door and walked in without the slightest idea of my situation or needs. I did not grant him an interview—he simply assumed that I had all the afternoon to talk to him. I have never met a more irritating specimen of salesmanship, if that is what you call it. This man has a maddening habit of seizing one's arm or coat lapel, sticking his face so close that flecks of saliva fly from his lips and shower one. In view of the fact that he is not especially dainty in the care of his person, you can imagine the nauseating effect that his methods produce. And you simply cannot argue with him. I certainly do not want to see that salesman again.

This report may seem exaggerated, but contact with *K* showed that the methods described by the lawyer were absolutely characteristic of this salesman. He was apparently lacking in social perception. In his enthusiasm for whatever he happened to be talking about, he simply ignored the other person's point of view. He cared nothing for any opinion except his own.

This point was clearly evident in any attempt to give him advice. Although he frequently asked for criticism, he refused to listen to it. If any suggestion was made as to how a particular sale might have been handled to advantage, he invariably attacked the suggestion and tried by interminable arguments to show the absurdity of the proposed method. He was so resistant to suggestions as to selling methods that any hints as to his unpleasant personal habits seemed futile. Apparently there was no way to get inside his barrier of defensive arguments. An intelligence test—which he vigorously declared to be of no value—showed that he was decidedly below average in capacity for most forms of intellectual activity. Perhaps this explains in part his lack of insight.

This man represents a type sometimes encountered in groups of salesmen. Almost every sales class has one or more. These individuals are crude, ignorant, talkative, opinionated, argumentative. Wherever they go, they bring the practice of salesmanship into disrepute. Rarely are they amenable to instruction or improvement.

Preparation for Selling.

When first interviewed, Perry *W* was not engaged in selling. His case is here presented because it carries some interesting suggestions for the student, especially for the person who is not yet employed in selling but hopes to secure a position.

W was a country boy, who had journeyed to the city to make his fortune. He secured work in the delivery department of a printing establishment but regarded this as merely temporary. His great desire was to become a salesman, and to that end he sought advice as to the best method of securing a position.

The first impression created by this young man was somewhat unfavorable. He was carelessly dressed; his linen was not clean; his fingernails were grimy. His manners were crude. After talking with him, however, one became

impressed with his openness and sincerity, his enthusiasm, his willingness to learn. It seemed possible that he had considerable ability if his energies could be rightly directed.

The first suggestion given to him was that if he proposed to make selling his vocation, he could afford to approach its study in the same serious manner that he would take up the study of any profession. He was told that at the moment he had nothing very definite to offer a possible employer except his willingness to work, which, although a valuable asset, was not enough to carry him very far.

W recognized the truth of these observations and asked for aid in planning a program of self-improvement that would place him in a better position to ask for a chance in selling. In response to this request the following suggestions were made:

1. That he set about improving his physical appearance.
2. That he read books on the subject of selling and familiarize himself with the trade magazines devoted to the subject.
3. That he read books on general business topics, in order to broaden his outlook.
4. That he take evening courses in public speaking and in business English.
5. That he deliberately set out to become acquainted with some successful salesmen, in order to study their methods.
6. That he make up a list of five sales managers under whom he would like to work, with a real reason for each choice.
7. That he set about familiarizing himself with the needs of these five men, their likes and dislikes, the nature of their business; that he outline a definite plan of approach to be used in showing them that he could serve them profitably.
8. That he determine to handle his present job in such an efficient manner that he would be able to get a recommendation from his superior when it came time to seek a new connection.

These rather simple suggestions appealed to *W*, and he set about putting them into practice. He enrolled for evening courses of instruction along the lines of his need. He deliberately tried to associate himself with the kind of people who could show him better manners and social

ease. He bought better clothing and took better care of his person. He made a serious attempt to discover possible employers who had the reputation of being "good men to work under." He practiced salesmanship from day to day, using his immediate superior as a customer and trying to employ the principles of effective selling in keeping this customer satisfied.

As it actually worked out, *W* did not put into effect his plan to make a campaign for a position under a good sales manager. He had developed a friendship with a salesman of the publishing company for which he was working. This friend knew of his interest in getting into selling. He also knew that *W* had made a good record in the delivery department, that he was studying subjects that would help him in future sales work. He was so impressed by *W*'s qualities that he influenced the sales manager of the publishing company to have *W* transferred to the sales department. Thus, in less than a year after beginning his plan of study, *W* found himself advantageously situated and in a measure prepared to handle the opportunity thus presented.

This man's case illustrates the application of some of the old copybook maxims that never really go out of style. Intelligent preparation for selling does pay. A good way to secure an opportunity to sell is to get ready for it.

Lack of Preparation.

When first interviewed young Carlton *D* was much discouraged. He explained that he had been trying to sell, but without much success. He said that he thought he was afflicted with an "inferiority complex" and that he had about concluded that he was a failure as a salesman and likely to fail at everything else.

D was but twenty-two years of age and recently graduated from college. He was working for his father-in-law, who was an inventor and manufacturer of certain appliances to be used in large refrigeration plants. The father-in-law had formerly been a very successful refrigeration engineer.

He had given up his position to go into business for himself, planning to make and market some of his own patented devices. He had urged his new son-in-law to come into the business as sales manager. *D* had done so and had spent several months calling upon plant engineers, but without making any sales. As a result of his experience his morale was badly shaken. He was very sensitive of the opinion of his wife and her family, and he felt that this first failure would mar his whole life. In trying to diagnose his difficulty he said:

> My trouble is that I'm naturally weak. I cannot talk back to people. When I go into a plant, I am simply scared half to death all the time. I do not have any confidence in myself. What I need is a course or a book that would give me self-confidence. Maybe some psychologist could psychoanalyze me and remove this terrible inferiority complex. I know I cannot sell as long as I have it.

This man's attitude toward himself and his failure is not uncommon among salesmen. Some individuals tend to blame themselves severely—frequently too severely—for real or fancied weaknesses. Perhaps a part of their self-accusation is a concealed form of sympathy hunting. Frequently, as in this case, they are looking for some magic means that will give them an immediate power to dominate the interview.

Analysis of this salesman showed that he was of normal intelligence. As rated by the Allport ascendency-submissiveness test he did not show any pronounced tendency to submissiveness. His appearance was good; and aside from his own declaration, he did not show any indication of weakness or shyness. He had worked his way through college and in addition had been a leader in campus activities. As far as could be determined by observation, there was nothing in his personality to prevent his achieving success in selling.

Turning to a closer study of his present work, it became increasingly obvious that he had been pushed into a line of

selling for which he was not equipped. The men whom he had to interview were mature individuals, engineers with a background of experience in their work, and usually with strong opinions as to the practicability of different types of machinery. Their language was technical. They soon realized that the young college graduate, with no engineering background and no practical experience in refrigeration, was not able to appreciate their problems. He was trying to sell them equipment that meant giving up old and tried methods for new methods, as yet largely theoretical. To accept his device would involve the expenditure of large sums of money. Naturally, then, these prospects usually refused to give any serious consideration to the salesman's talk. They dismissed him as quickly as possible.

From the common-sense point of view it seems obvious that the salesman in such a situation cannot hope to achieve much success without more adequate preparation. Such was the advice given in this case. Young *D* was told that if he expected to sell to refrigeration engineers, he would have to equip himself with enough information to be able to think intelligently about their problems. It was pointed out that even with such a background selling would be difficult, for the nature of the proposition was such that purchase would be made only after careful investigation and thorough conviction. *D* was told that he ought not to blame himself too severely for his failure and that, above all, he ought not to think that one failure necessarily marked him for life. He was advised to forget about his supposed inferiority complex and to stop seeking for quick and magical means of making people buy.

Fortunately for *D*, his father-in-law soon decided that the market for his devices was too small to be practical and went out of business. *D* was then free to go into another line, where he has done very well. His success has given him a greater confidence in himself, and he has worked out a sounder philosophy of selling. He now realizes that he

was trying to accomplish something that was at least temporarily beyond his power

D's case is somewhat exceptional, in that we here find a very poorly prepared individual trying to sell a difficult product. He well illustrates the futility of such effort. He also illustrates the rather common tendency to seek for some secret formula by which the stubborn prospect may be "made to buy."

It is, of course, dangerous to suggest giving up and admitting defeat, for salesmen are all too prone to this easy way out, but in cases such as *D*'s it does seem rather futile for one to strive hopelessly to master a selling assignment so far beyond one's powers. It may as well be recognized —inspirational lectures to the contrary—that there are some products that cannot be sold in commercially profitable quantities by every salesman who hopefully and ignorantly starts out to sell them. The philosophy of failure and self-limitation must be avoided like the plague, but that does not necessitate any fanatical belief that "any man can sell anything to anybody if he has enough will power." Fortunate are the salesmen who, like *D*, escape gracefully from the attempt to sell a difficult product without adequate equipment in knowledge and in personality.

The Self-conscious Salesman.

In contrast with the case just described, an ambitious young shoe salesman did exhibit a real example of inferiority feeling with numerous compensatory symptoms. Since a number of salesmen present similar problems, a brief description of his difficulty and its partial solution is desirable.

This salesman, John *R*, first attracted attention to himself by his peculiar, almost hysterical laugh. He was a student in a sales class; and every time he tried to express an opinion, he laughed in such an absurd way at his own remarks that he aroused the derision of the rest of the class. A sample of his conversation ran somewhat like this:

What I do not understand (nervous laugh) is how one can size up the customer's financial standing. (Laugh.) The other day (laugh), a lady (laugh) came into the store to look at some shoes. (Laugh.) She was not very well dressed, so I started by showing her a rather cheap pair. (Laugh.) She was insulted at being shown such a cheap shoe and walked right out of the store. (Laugh.)

Obviously this man's distressing reaction did not express real amusement but was a nervous habit somewhat comparable to stuttering. Observation showed that it occurred when he was excited or slightly embarrassed. At the beginning of an interview it was pronounced; but as the salesman became more at ease, it tended to disappear. It was much more in evidence when John *R* was talking to older people or before a class. Although not an extreme handicap, it did tend to produce a bad impression. It made the observer feel that this salesman was weak and nervous and self-conscious.

Several conversations with *R* gave a more complete picture of his personality. In youth he had been weak and sickly. Older boys, and even boys of his own age, had bullied him. His father had been extremely stern and intolerant. A harsh schoolmaster had added to *R*'s difficulties. Thus he came to have a great fear of arousing the ill opinion of others. Perhaps the laugh was adopted as a language mechanism. It was essentially an apology for expressing his own opinions. It became habitual, occurring when he was nervous or self-conscious.

At the same time *R* was keenly ambitious and determined to succeed. At an early age he realized that because of his inferior physique he had no chance when it came to competitions of strength, so he turned his attention to a long quest for methods that would enable him to conquer by skill of body or mind. He studied boxing and wrestling tricks (though without much success). He followed diet fads, investigated all kinds of cures and regimes. He took a dozen "courses," practiced memory systems, tried to follow mysterious methods of character analysis. He was

an eager reader of books on salesmanship, especially the portions that had to do with tricks and stratagems.

Investigation showed that *R*'s employers had a fairly good opinion of him. His weaknesses were recognized, but he was so earnest, so ambitious, so alert, and so willing to do anything to improve that it was hard not to admire him. It was apparent that as he grew older, he was overcoming his early physical handicaps; and if he could be guided to discard his fads and quack remedies and settle down to the sober business of selling, it seemed likely that he might achieve considerable success.

R was eager—almost too eager—to talk over his personal problems. He exhibited a pathetic desire to do anything that would enable him to improve himself. This was pointed out to him, and it was suggested that it was time he directed less attention to himself and more to the problems of his employers and of his customers. He was shown that his youth had been one long search for some magic means of securing equality and superiority in the face of physical obstacles. He had spent too much time in thinking and scheming, too little time in doing. He needed to turn his energies now to constructive work.

Since his laugh tended to make a bad impression on others, it seemed necessary to make one exception to the foregoing suggestion. He was told that if possible he should not worry about the laugh but that he ought to make a determined effort to stop it. It must be admitted that this advice had its dangers, for to make a man more clearly conscious of a self-conscious reaction may merely add to his confusion. This danger was explained to *R*, and he was told that a helpful plan would be to talk less, making an effort to show interest in the conversation of others, leading them to do most of the talking. It seemed likely that in this way he might hope to create a better impression.

R has been working along these lines and at last report had made real progress. Perhaps a part of this progress is

due to greater maturity and better physical health. In any case, he is achieving greater stability, less nervousness and appearance of timidity. His work interests him and is taking more and more of his attention, a very desirable thing for people of his type. He is achieving a degree of extroversion, which seems to be important in selling. His was an extreme case, but many salesmen are afflicted to some degree with similar self-conscious symptoms that might profitably receive treatment along the lines recommended.

A Normal Salesman.

A study of the preceding cases might lead to the conclusion that all salesmen exhibit such abnormal traits and personality problems. This idea is certainly false. Most students of salesmanship are practical, common-sense, ambitious people. The description of a normal case will be useful in making this point clear and in suggesting some helpful ideas for the average student of the subject.

Arthur *M* is owner and manager of the sales branch of a well-known automobile company. He has been very successful in this work and has expanded his business to the point where he has five salesmen working for him. He is a friendly, cheerful individual, of good appearance and businesslike manner. He has a wife and two children to whom he is devoted. He takes an active part in the affairs of his community and is generally liked and respected. He seems in every way to illustrate the normal, happy, prosperous, well-adjusted personality.

Because of home conditions, *M* was not able to secure a college education. He has not regarded this as a serious handicap, but because of a genuine interest in knowledge he has read widely and studied diligently, so that his breadth of information is greater than that of most college-trained men.

His study of selling affords a good idea of his methods. He began by taking a course in marketing in the extension

courses offered by a well-known university. He supplemented this course by readings in economics and by first-hand observation of the marketing methods of successful organizations. He reads the trade papers and keeps a file of ideas that men in other lines have found useful.

In his study of salesmanship he began with the literature supplied by the company that he represents. He has bought most of the standard books on salesmanship and has read them intelligently, accepting and applying those parts which seemed to him of practical value but avoiding all "systems." He does not care much for the purely inspirational books, although he has found them useful occasionally in spurring to action a salesman who is discouraged.

In addition to his reading on salesmanship he has devoted considerable time to the study of advertising. He has taken a course in psychology and is interested in the practical application of facts about human nature. He found the study and practice of public speaking of value in his work.

In his reading and study *M*'s attitude is critical and analytic, yet receptive. He realizes that books and lectures are but means to an end. He looks for the kernel of truth and tries to discard the chaff. His point of view is essentially sane and practical, yet basically he is an idealist and an enthusiast.

This man is a good salesman. Measured by prevailing standards he is a success. He might well be taken as a model by every man embarking upon a career in selling.

Questions and Exercises

1. From your own experience describe an individual who is laboring under a selling handicap that might be removed. Outline a practical plan by which this salesman might improve himself.

2. Make a list of what you consider the most common causes of failure in selling, arranged in the order of their importance.

3. Think of some salesmen whom you know who are not likely to improve very much. In your opinion, what prevents their progress? Present a list of traits that thus act as barriers to the salesman's growth.

4. Of the principles of selling discussed in this book which do you consider the most important? Why?

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