

# The principles of good advertising never change

Advertising is something you do when you cannot send a personal salesman.

And the principles of effective person-to-person selling haven't changed basically since the first man who built a better mouse trap extolled its virtues to his neighbors. Selling by means of advertising (which is really selling to the thousands rather than to one person at a time) still operates according to these same rules which have long been the basis of effective mass-selling.

Surprising as it may seem to those who think of advertising as "a Johnny come lately," these principles were known and were in use half a century ago . . . as you will see when you read this talk given before the Springfield Ad Men's Club on November 7, 1907.

Good advertising is a salesman talking to hundreds of customers at once.

The public is cautious, sometimes suspicious; this is why most advertisers find their task burdensome.

The problem of dealing with human nature is the most difficult of all problems. Silver tongues are needed in exploiting one's wares if golden results are to be expected.

To create a demand is the need of the hour with every business man.

Definite policies must be pursued and the persuasive touch in advertising discovered.

To find the psychological moment for the exploitation of new wares causes concern.

The day has passed when any old thing will do. One must be fertile in ideas.

The coining of new phrases is essential; to study is imperative; nonsense must be avoided and common sense must prevail; percentages must be calculated; conditions not overstated.

To back up religiously everything of his that appears in cold type is every advertiser's duty.

Extravagance in statement is the mother of suspicion.

Make the do-so of your advertisement just a little better than the say-so.

Pyrotechnical advertising loses its value with the dying out of the flare.

It is bad policy to get the best of a man. He'll get back at you some way—some day—dead sure.

The real object of advertising is to inform, not to deceive.

The philosophy of the grafter when he says:

*"Let us then be up and doing,  
With a bluff for any man;  
And if you can't do everybody,  
Do as many as you can"*

must be eliminated.

The question of the How, the Why, the What and the When is a stern proposition to the advertiser.

What is needed in the advertising business is a repair shop for the renovation of old ideas.

To succeed one must possess the ability to transform doubt into certainty.

A good advertisement is the thing that makes a lot of people want to get there first.

Bargain counter people must still be reckoned with.

The cleverest ad-writer is he who can write a line that will make people think a column.

The best advertisement is one that makes a definite proposition.

The shorter the advertisement, the more genius is required to produce it.

Simplicity is essential.

The expert formerly wrote this way—"An exquisite and delightful apparel conception for juvenile wear." Now he puts it—"A pretty little coat for the baby."

The printed page cannot appeal directly to any of the senses except the eye, but the argument may be of such a nature that the reader's senses are appealed to indirectly through his imagination.

The nervous system which does not respond to sound or to any other of the sensible qualities is a defective nervous system. Advertisements are sometimes spoken of as the nervous system of the business world.

That advertisement of musical instruments which contains nothing to awaken images of sound is a defective advertisement.

That advertisement of foods which contains nothing to awaken images of taste is a defective advertisement.

The survival of the fittest seems to be a law of advertising as it is of everything else that develops. Traditionally, the practical business man scoffs at theory. If ever there was ground to expect sarcastic and pessimistic prophecies from the hard headed business man, it was when it was proposed to establish advertising on a theoretical basis deduced from psychology. Such adverse criticism has, however, been the exception.

The American business man is not afraid of theories. He wants them, and the more the better. The advertisement writer is really a psychologist, since he seeks to influence the human mind.

Human nature is a great factor in advertising success and he who writes advertisements without reference to it is apt

to find that he has reckoned without his host.

If we are to find and to express the psychological laws upon which the art of advertising is based, we shall have made a distinct advance, for we shall have added the science to the art of advertising.

The mere mention of psychological terms, habit, self-conception, discrimination, association, memory, imagination, perception, reason, emotion, instinct and will, should create a flood of new thought that should appeal to every thoughtful consumer of advertising space. The up-to-date business man should leave off groping in the dark and come out into the open.

Just how extensively an article will sell, depends upon just how good or bad the copy is—that is, how explicit or convincing it is.

Let me say a few words about good copy.

## Good Copy

**FIRST.** There must be a definite motive or purpose. Be specific as to your central idea. A well defined idea to which the wording lends itself harmoniously and effectually and which convinces, while it attracts and charms.

**SECOND.** Your copy must be full of life. Action begets action. Good things happen when Energy gets chummy with Enterprise.

*Good copy is the poetry of advertising. It is taking a plain fact and making it plainer and more impressive by the art of the language. It is a song which lures and educates and prompts to action.*

**THIRD.** Take the position of the prospective buyer. Would you be influenced by your own advertisement? A wise plan after writing the ad, is to step out of your position into that of the position of the purchaser and see if you have made clear every point that would tend to influence you to buy the goods.

**FOURTH.** Vary your copy so as to reach different types of people. To make a successful bid for the patronage of the public, the whole social order should be studied and carefully considered.

*To stoop to the use of second rate copy and to buy cheap designs to fill expensively paid-for space, will ultimately show in decreased profits leaving in the minds of the readers a question as to the quality of your goods.*

**FIFTH.** Know all you can about the goods you advertise, their manufacture and uses. The man who is most conversant with the details of the manufacture and use of the article can best tell others about it. You must believe in the merits of your own goods.

**SIXTH.** Study the idea of leadership, of leading and influencing others.

*It is growing more difficult to strike a new line of expression because advertising has grown to such enormous proportions and has drawn into its surface so many varied talents, that to hit upon something new can almost be considered a discovery.*

**SEVENTH.** Read the classics for new ideas and improved forms for expression—Shakespeare, Emerson and the Prophets of the Old Testament. The writings of David in the Psalms indicate that he was a past grand master of expressive word weaving. He was especially effective in the direct command and in the harmonious reiteration of an idea. You would do well to note how he could start the interest and work towards the climax.

**EIGHTH.** Feature your advertisement to suit the times and seasons.

**NINTH.** Study your prospective buyers, first, with the idea of reaching a possible need; second, with the intention of supplying it in a superior manner.

**TENTH.** Always keep before you the question, "Will it bring results?" That should be both the first and the last question in judging good copy. You may have burned the night oil, written and re-edited and given to the sharp teeth of the type your masterpiece, and then left out the very necessary feature that makes for results.

Finally, your copy should be ready 24 hours before the enterprising newspaper men call for it.

Reflection frequently uncovers a multitude of errors.

*"The Philosophy of Advertising"—a paper read before the Springfield Ad Men's Club by Henry N. Hansen, Secretary of the Springfield Young Men's Christian Association. Reprinted from the Springfield Illinois Journal—Nov. 7, 1907.*

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