

A manufacturer of coconut, the largest in the field, had built a good volume through various channels but his distribution to the grocery trade was not thoroughly developed. In preparation for consumer advertising he scheduled an intensive distribution campaign. The first results were disappointing; only about one out of seven dealers interviewed was sold. The dealer would say to the salesman, "What, you trying to sell me coconut? See all that coconut on the shelf? I have had that stuff for a couple of months. It doesn't move. There is no call for it. I'll sell you coconut cheap. You can take it away with you!"

Analysis disclosed the resistance: The independent grocer carries 1,500 to 1,700 items; the chain store 600 to 900. A list of these items in order of volume shows butter leading with about 12 per cent and coconut near the bottom with a small fraction of 1 per cent. This resistance blocked the salesman. A new appeal to the dealer had to be found.

The sales manager and agency man, confronted with that problem, found a solution which appeared surprisingly simple, once it had been worked out. Checking over his mother's grocery slips, one of these men found frequent purchases of six items—butter, canned milk, eggs, sugar, flour and lard. Added up, these six items made about 50 per cent of her grocery bill. He later verified this with wholesalers and retailers. Then he asked his mother her recipe for coconut cake—so much butter, so many eggs, so much milk, a quantity of sugar, a quantity of flour. He also obtained her recipes for other coconut dishes. His plan had begun to shape itself in his mind.

From that beginning came this sales appeal: The salesman lays before the dealer a striking sales portfolio and says: "Here are some new facts on the grocery business. We checked sales in ten stores similar to yours. I don't know whether you ever bothered to figure it up, but the average store sells nearly 1,700 items; 1,694 of these are only half of your business. The other six—all big sellers—make the other half. Those six items mean as much to you as the other 1,694. Here they are (showing picture of store and the six big sellers)—butter, milk, eggs, sugar, flour and lard."

Then he continues along this line: "Now here's something you may laugh at. But wait for the facts. We contend that coconut could be one of the best salesmen in your store. Sounds funny, doesn't it? But look at this picture (showing a luscious coconut cake in the natural colors). Isn't that a beautiful cake?

Make's your mouth water, doesn't it? Well, we are starting now to advertise that cake to three out of every four families here in your neighborhood. Also delicious coconut pies and puddings. I would like to taste that cake; so would you; so will they. These people who buy their groceries here from you or from your competitors will want to eat these tempting things. Now when Mrs. Jones makes a coconut cake here is what she uses (showing exact quantities of butter, milk, eggs, sugar, and flour). That is why coconut can be one of your best salesmen. Stop and think of the other items she must buy to make her coconut cake, her pie, or her pudding. Here is the advertising for your store and here is the big consumer campaign."

During the talk the salesman covers his company—age, size, prestige; his product; his advertising for the consumer, for the dealer; and his proposition. In seven cases out of ten he gets the order. That is not the record of a few men; it is the average of over forty men. Nor is it the record of a short-time drive; it is the average maintained over a period of months.

#### E. Other Examples

Other equally convincing examples of this improved plan of selling might be cited:

- how ten salesmen stocked two thousand eight hundred dealers with a new cheese in fourteen days;
- how a crew working the drug trade on a test campaign with a new specialty never before sold by druggists obtained only three orders after 124 interviews and then by this plan closed 50 per cent of the dealers called upon;
- how the bread sales of a large baker were increased 35 per cent in one month;
- how tires and brake-lining have been sold and new records established;
- how the Sun-Maid Raisin salesmen have sold the bakers of the United States "Two Saturdays in Every Week;"
- how a large New York department store was sold a trade-marked line of women's clothing, the first time in twenty years this manufacturer had a New York store carrying his goods with his label.

#### F. Some Principles of Sales Training

These examples, we feel, prove the truth of certain principles:

1. That it is a planning function of the sales department to develop by analysis and experiment the one

best sequence of ideas for a complete sales story, to prepare a vivid pictorial presentation of this sequence, and to prove in advance of any instructions to the sales force that the sales story will get orders.

2. That it is a joint function of sales planning and sales production to exercise those qualities of leadership and that teaching ability which will enable the men to know what to do and how to do it. How to make the sale is fully as important as when, where, and at what cost. How this joint function of leadership and teaching is carried out depends upon the personality, experience, and ability of the sales executives in a particular organization.

3. That it is a function of sales production to exercise control and sympathetic supervision over the salesmen, to know by good records and intimate personal appraisal what is actually happening in the field. Moreover, the man responsible for sales planning should participate in this function so that he can constantly or periodically improve the method.

A word of explanation may throw some light on this question. To appreciate the resistance a salesman faces, one fact must be kept in mind. The buyer faces hundreds of thousands of salesmen each year—a surprisingly large number as checked and added up. He knows from experience that he will buy only from a few salesmen, so when your salesman calls, the buyer looks on him as one of the mass, takes a defensive position, and seizes the first opening or excuse to say "No, I'm not interested." When he first sees your salesman, he may unconsciously think to himself, "How can I get rid of him?" When the salesman starts to talk, the buyer watches for his opening. Frequently the salesman gets into difficulty by stating his proposition too soon. Then the buyer gives some plausible reason why he should not buy, or gives no reason but refuses the proposition. Time and again the salesman is thrown off the track at this point by combating the stated objection. He wastes his time and energy trying to break down the artificial resistance. But if the salesman simply says, "Yes, sir, I'll come to that in just a moment," and goes on with his story, he can frequently present his chain of ideas in such a convincing and interesting way that the buyer forgets his artificial objection. It is surprising to find how this method simplifies the problem of closing. We hear much about "good closers," the "knack of closing." With the right story, well told, with force tempered by tact and humor, closing becomes much simpler. Of course, different types of men must be

closed in various ways. The variations are too numerous to touch on here but with a basic plan that is sound, an intelligent salesman born with reasonable imagination, ingenuity, and humor can work out these minor questions.

During the last two or three years more than 1,000 salesmen trained according to this plan have produced results considerably in advance of sales obtained by the same type of man without this sort of training. Fundamentally this plan involves two elements.

1. To discover some hidden self-interest of the buyer which is deeper and stronger than any motive he reveals to the salesman and to capitalize that human contact in molding his decision.

2. To recognize the fact that possibly 85 per cent of the buyers are "eye-minded," in the sense that their inner thoughts take the form of mental pictures, and to appeal so forcefully to the eye as well as the ear that all statements are vividly photographed on the buyer's mind.

Put this question to the average salesman—"When you enter a dealer's store what does he want to know?" The salesman will probably answer—he wants to know, "Who I am, what firm and product I represent, whether it will sell and how much he makes." Most salesmen feel these are the primary things to cover. They cover these questions with the buyer and make or lose the sale on this basis.

As a matter of fact, the dealer conceals his real interest. He does not let the salesman look behind the scenes of his mind. He never shows his strong inner desires. We know, however, the average man is more interested in himself, his business, his bank account, his family, his home, his future and his competitors, than in any of the points mentioned above.

That fact gives us the clue to this new method of appeal to the dealer's emotion. If the salesman will simply brush aside commonplace sales talk and make a contact with the buyer's self-interest, he can then talk to him in a sincere and convincing way about things which mean most to him in his daily life. From that start the salesman can proceed by a gradual and logical story to the point where the customer is ready to buy.

In selling this way the salesman has a great advantage when the high spots of his story are successfully visualized by striking illustrations, large type headlines, and condensed statements. With a well-prepared sales portfolio he keeps the buyer's eye on the visual presentation while he pours the story into the buyer's