



In the Interest of Sound Advertising

Building Business on Facts—Cutting Out the Gambling Element—How We Try to Benefit the Consumer, the Manufacturer and the Advertising Man

Any advertising, to be successful, must do these things:

It must efficiently and economically sell the goods advertised.

It must give the consumer something he needs or wants, or a better article than some other at the price, or it must supply an article more conveniently or with better service.

Unless it does these things, advertising is not economically sound and cannot command permanent success.

The plan of advertising, to accomplish these ends, obviously must include much more than merely printing a "clever ad."

Facts, Above All Else

Successful advertising is achieved by (1) getting facts, (2) weighing facts, (3) acting in accordance with facts.

The advertiser must know whether the public has a conscious need for his goods, or whether the public must be educated to that need. He must know what others have done in similar lines in order that he may take advantage of previous educational work and that he may avoid the mistakes of others. He must know whether a certain quality or style or price will be most suitable to work out his plan successfully.

He must know the habits of the people in buying similar goods, and in what kind of stores they buy them—corner grocery stores, specialty shops, department stores, drug stores, hardware stores.

He must know something of the possible market for his goods, how much of it he already has and where it is. He must know what kind of people buy his goods and how they may be reached, by both the advertising and the actual distribution of the goods. Sometimes an advertiser has concentrated very expensive effort on one large city where it was not worth while to make the effort—as results subsequently proved. In other cases advertisers have scattered their efforts everywhere when it was impossible to work more than certain sections profitably because of excessive freight charges or other conditions that could and should have been known.

Sometimes the possible profits will not permit of extensive advertising. Sometimes the goods are a novelty that cannot endure, or a staple that does not fill the need. These are but a few of the many details that ought to be known before a single line of advertising is written.

It is an astonishing truth that manufacturers often lack vital information about their own business, and yet are eager to start advertising, blindly.

A Central Research Bureau

During the past decade it has become increasingly evident that there should be some large central organization, having both the resources and the confidence of the various branches of trade, to gather and make available such information.

Recognizing this unfilled need, The Curtis Pub-

lishing Company a few years ago established a "Division of Commercial Research."

This Division is studying, one by one, the chief industries, spending from six months to a year on each. The method is to go out on the road and visit hundreds of cities in all parts of the country, calling on manufacturers, wholesalers, retail stores and consumers, and applying to the information obtained by these interviews keen, commonsense methods of analysis which will bring out the underlying facts. The industries thus far covered and the time spent on each are as follows:

Automobiles, trucks and motorcycles, and their accessories. One year.

Department stores, with particular reference to textiles and women's ready-to-wear clothing. One year.

Agricultural implements. Six months.

For the past eight months the investigators have been occupied with the vast subject of foods and the problems and methods of grocery stores. The conclusions, which will be ready probably next summer, will be of great importance to all manufacturers dealing with grocery stores.

In making these investigations the representatives of this Division up to date have traveled more than 125,000 miles. The reports already made include more than 8000 typewritten pages and 900 tables and drawn charts.

These reports contain some information given in confidence, which cannot therefore be made public. The conclusions reached, however, are placed at the disposal of any manufacturer or any advertising agent.

Without Bias

So far as humanly possible this Division works without bias. It is made up not of advertising men, but of expert investigators trained in economics. Its whole purpose is that advertising campaigns may be built on facts—not on impressions, not on haphazard guesses, not on prejudice, not on favoritism, but on facts.

Its work is of great importance to this Company, because it makes our advice worthy of being sought after by both manufacturers and advertising agents, who have found it well worth while.

It serves also in preventing us from soliciting or accepting advertising which is not sound—from wasting time and from getting customers whom we must inevitably lose, and with them lose prestige.

We are quite as eager to know conditions unfavorable to advertising as we are to know conditions which favor it. If any product ought not to be advertised in our publications, we want to know it.

\$25,000 Saved

For example, a manufacturer of woollens of a special character wanted to spend \$25,000 advertising them through The Saturday Evening Post. Applying the results of our textile investigations to his product and his market, we pointed out what he had not taken into account—that the

specialized market he hoped to reach demanded several widely varying qualities. He could never appeal to it with one line of goods. The "style prejudice" was so strong that as soon as he had sold one part of the market, the other part would reject his line. And the very part he wanted most could not be sold at all by advertising in our publications. We therefore advised against the use of The Saturday Evening Post, and the manufacturer saved \$25,000.

This is but one of many cases.

A manufacturer of shirt waists wanted to advertise in The Ladies' Home Journal. We were obliged to tell this manufacturer that, because of (1) the peculiar characteristics of his business, (2) the general influences affecting his line, and (3) the type of his competition, he could not advertise successfully in The Journal with the amount of money at his disposal. The cost would have been prohibitive.

An advertisement announcing a new automobile came to us recently through an advertising agency. A car of the class proposed, sold by the methods which this manufacturer had in mind, would probably have been successful a few years ago. But our knowledge of the development of the automobile industry made us certain that if tried today it would fail. We therefore declined the business.

We believe that in this instance, as in many others, the information gained through commercial research enabled us to prevent not only a loss to the advertiser, but also injury to the reputation of the advertising agency, and to our own reputation, which would have been the inevitable outcome if the advertising had been tried and proved unsuccessful.

Good Business Sense

In other words, it is not merely good ethics. It is good business as well. Advertising sometimes has suffered through attempting the impossible. It is to the best advantage of every advertising organization to urge that commercial information be gathered and used as widely as possible in building advertising on sound foundations and preventing waste effort—that it do its part to take the gambling element out of business and to substitute scientific method.

And this is to the best interest of the consumer as well, because well-founded advertising means better service and worth-while goods for all who buy.

Our work in commercial research, therefore, helps us to offer

- (1) to manufacturers, practical advice;
- (2) to advertising agents, helpful co-operation, and

(3) to our readers, reasonable assurance that an article advertised in any of our publications is being sold by a plan that is economically sound.

Which means that such advertising is worthy of your patronage.

Our reports on department stores, textiles, automobiles, agricultural implements, etc., are not printed, but are in typewritten form at the advertising offices of this Company. Manufacturers and advertising men are cordially invited to make appointments to call and inspect these volumes.

The Curtis Publishing Company,

Independence Square, Philadelphia