

Advertising Saw Mills

A saw mill isn't a fad, or a spectacular novelty, or a household necessity, or any of those things that your old line conservative loves to think of as "just the kind of thing to advertise."

It's a downright prosaic piece of machinery. It costs a lot of money. Not one man in ten thousand needs one around the place.

And even those that do need one have to be shown just how it will pay for itself.

But with all that, saw mills have been very successfully advertised. And in the recent experience of the American Saw Mill Machinery Company, of Hackettstown, N. J., is an interesting lesson on the practical aspects of an advertising problem.

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This company had been advertising for a number of years, using, in addition to the trade press and export journals, a large number of farm papers.

It had a considerable line of wood-working machinery, with a portable saw mill at \$250 and upward as the "leader."

Previous to 1910 its method of advertising was to take small space in a large number of farm papers. The idea was that many farmers had woodlots which they wanted to turn into money by sawing up lumber during the slack months of the winter season. These farmers, who already realized that they ought to have a portable saw mill, would look through the advertisements in their farm journals, send for catalogues and finally buy.

This was just what happened. The business grew steadily and the volume of requests for catalogues increased—until about 1910.

Then the company began to feel a let-down. It became evident that most of the farmers who already knew that they needed saw mills had been reached by the advertising. It was now time to begin to educate other farmers who had never given any thought whatever to the possibilities of cutting their own lumber for their own buildings or of going into the lumber business by cutting up their own or their neighbors' timber. There were also many owners of large country estates who could well install saw mills, both for pride and profit.

It was determined to use larger space for the purpose of catching the attention of these two classes, and to write the advertisements and the booklets not as formerly from the technical point of view, but the way a salesman would talk, showing just how a saw mill could be made to pay for itself.

During the season of 1910-1911, therefore, quarter-page advertisements were used instead of the smaller ones. Results were immediate. So many more inquiries were received that the average cost per inquiry dropped from \$2.60 to \$2.46.

The third season, half pages were used and the average cost per inquiry went down to \$2.39.

The next step was to use full pages. In December, 1913, the first full-page advertisement appeared. This was in *The Country Gentleman*. It was later repeated in the same publication and in three others. *Printers' Ink*, in reporting the results, says:

"It brought in a flood of inquiries. It is also notable from the fact that it was the first to bring a customer into the office and sell him a saw mill outright. The customer, who is an officer of a large corporation, thought it would be a good idea to put the caretakers of his summer home in the country at work during the winter cleaning up some of the timber on the place and turning it into salable lumber.

"The same advertisement also produced several other direct orders."

By the end of last season the average cost of inquiry was down to \$1.52, which is very low when it is considered that the article is sold at \$250 or more. And furthermore, the class of customers represented by the inquiries was much higher.

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It is significant that the American Saw Mill Machinery Company during the present season is using in *The Country Gentleman* four pages as against the two pages of last season.

The war would have been the best possible excuse for reducing the advertising, because the export trade was shot to pieces and the domestic business, previous to January first, was greatly reduced. But instead of cutting down the advertising, the company went ahead and augmented it.

Its faith has been justified by a heavy increase in orders and inquiries since 1915 opened.

On a single day 189 inquiries were received—all but 22 directly traceable to six publications.

That it continued to advertise with larger space in spite of depression is probably responsible for the fact that this company, which a few years ago seemed to be facing a declining market, *believes that it is on the eve of the biggest year in its history.*

The lessons of this story are perhaps these:

Almost any product can be advertised if you approach it rightly.

After you have saturated your first market there is often a way of finding a secondary and even greater market.

Picking the right place to put your effort, then going at it intensively, with increasing emphasis, and without interruption, rolls up a greater and greater wave of influence which even serious business disturbances cannot resist.

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INDEPENDENCE SQUARE, PHILADELPHIA

The Ladies' Home Journal

The Saturday Evening Post

The Country Gentleman