

metal, structural shapes, ties, lumber. Much of it is bought in conformity to specifications furnished by the traffic and other departments; practically all of it bought year after year on contracts, and prices vary so little at any given time that the purchasing agent's effort is directed chiefly to forecasting the future from his experience of the past.

Yet the personal equation in buying can be very definite, even here.

When the purchasing agent for one large system took charge, some years ago, he found that contracts ran from January 1 to December 31. This brought expirations in the busiest season of the year, when prices were likely to be highest. So he adopted the fiscal year ending June 30, thus throwing expirations into the dull summer months, when it was most logical to go into market for new prices.

Some railroad purchasing agents heritate to deal with sellers in friendship. In connection with all buying will be heard ugly rumors of commissions and "tips" given purchasing agents by sellers. There is undoubtedly a good deal of such dishonesty in business as a whole. But the rumors are usually much larger than the secret commissions. A veteran purchasing agent explains, for instance, how the directorate of his road includes men who also sit as directors on half the other big railroad systems. Any one of them might, at any meeting, call for schedules of prices being paid for supplies, and compare these with prices paid by every other road in the country. Commissions would make a noticeable difference in prices. Then, if a purchasing agent accepted a commission from a salesman, the latter's house must know—the president, the treasurer, the bookkeepers. It could not be kept secret.

Selling Power Plant Steam Specialties

The Kind of Copy that Pulls in Advertising Steam Specialties. Treating of Specific Installations and Suggesting General Applicability of the Apparatus by Means of Diagrams, Facts and Figures. How Enquiries Rapidly Decreased and Finally Ceased Entirely Within a Year After Advertising in Technical Journals Was Discontinued

BY S. E. BRYNER* IN SELLING MAGAZINE.

It would be superfluous to say that the vending of power plant machinery must obviously be conducted along a different line of action from that of any other class of merchandise; but we might even go farther, and say that nothing that is made and sold requires just the same measure of analytical study to bring about results, based upon correct scientific procedure, as the field of mechanical products, with its multitude of ramifications. We can divide and classify it almost to the degree of illimitability. Take, for example, power plant specialties. Within this category is embraced a vast number of machines, articles and apparatus of varied kinds, each differing from its neighbor in some essential particular, but all tending fundamentally toward one end—economy.

There arises in connection with the marketing of even so seemingly a simple thing as a steam trap some pretty problems that will tax the ingenuity and creative mind of the sales specialist, if he will but stop to analyze them.

PERFORMANCE IS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE TO THE BUYER.

The successful sales campaign must be conducted along educational lines, by which I mean a setting forth in comprehensive form the possibilities in the shape of duty or duties which the devices will perform, as well as a detailed description of the manner in which they should be applied.

To illustrate: Every steam using plant produces water of condensation which is steam condensed and returned to its original form—water. Steam traps primarily are designed to perform the function of extracting from the steam pipes the accumulations of condensed water, discharging usually into a hot well or receiver of some kind, or even out-of-doors to waste. It would appear the essence of simplicity to advertise a steam trap, of say, ordinary design, indulging perhaps, as the average advertiser is wont to do, in a prolific presentation of the claimed superlative qualities of the contrivance from the standpoint of make-up and the wonderful saving that its employment will effect; all this in broad generalities. But, while that is good, so far as it goes, it does not

in my opinion, go far enough. One manufacturer can sing a song just as alluring from the general standpoint of merit laudation as another, and the prospective buyer has little or no means at his command to differentiate between tweedledee and tweedledum. Let the seller, on the other hand, present his case seriatim, so to speak; proceed along educational lines; point out step by step the natural sequence of transpiring events from an engineering and scientific standpoint, not merely contenting himself with a flight of panegyrics, but striving to interest his prospective buyer in the individual problem with which he (the buyer) is contending, and present its solution. With the steam trap, for instance: he would make a thorough inspection of the plant, covering the conditions of pressure, grades, distances between water accumulation points, arrangement of piping and type of boiler. From these data would make a layout, showing where and how he would place the traps, size of delivery pipes, disposal of condensation to best advantage, and approximate cost of installation. He would leave no room for guesswork, and he would answer all questions before they were put.

He would thus secure first a more willing and consequently a more receptive listener; the impression made would be more lasting, and obviously the possibilities of a sale greatly augmented. The great variety of conditions which present themselves in this field alone offer to the studious-minded seller or advertiser—for the two are synonymous—a fertile field for profitable and highly absorbing investigation.

COMPARATIVE VALUES OF DIAGRAMS AND OTHER METHODS OF ILLUSTRATION.

The printed matter, such as pamphlets, booklets and the like, cannot be too comprehensive. Illustrations of actual installations should be given, and these views should be for reference, marked with clear explanations in the text matter. The seller should bear in mind at all times that what is clear as day to him may be dense as mud to the other fellow, whose mind is busy on other matters, and who has spent possibly a week or ten days

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