

Business on Business Principles

It is with considerable trepidation that I write this article on the proper manner of conducting a drug business, for a body of men, many of whom are so much better informed on that subject than I. But as the wisest and most experienced men often gather valuable lessons from the sayings of the simple and most inexperienced, I have chosen this subject to offer a few suggestions to the Alabama Pharmaceutical Association. I wish to offer advice to my brethren upon the subject of how to manage a business properly and successfully, so as to gain the respect and confidence of the community in which they do business, and to reach the goal of financial success.

I shall endeavor to place what I consider the necessary rules for success in the drug business in as concise a form as I think the importance of the subject permits.

It is the maxim of my employer that a man cannot sell goods unless he has goods to sell. Always strive to keep a full stock, a little of everything. Always have everything a customer calls for. There are some druggists who lose 20 per cent. of their trade by not having what people call for. A dime lost here and a quarter lost there, by not being able to supply the demand, amounts to dollars in the course of a year. To keep a small quantity of all things can be done at a small outlay. Since these days of rapid transit, you need only to keep a small quantity, and when sold, the markets are so convenient that the deficiency may be supplied in a short while.

Keep a stock book constantly on hand, and ready for use, and when you see an article growing low, order it. I know of nothing so injurious to a drug store as an imperfectly kept stock book. I know of nothing that gives the public such a good opinion of a place as to be able to get anything at a store that they may want. Let the impression become common that you have a good stock, and your trade is established. A man will reason in this way: I want to buy something—I will not go to A, because I may have to go somewhere else. He may not have it, and I might have to go to three or four places to get what I wish. I will go to B, because I know that I will find what I want there—I will not be obliged to hunt for it.

Keep the stock clear and well preserved. There are a great many things in all drug stores which are classed as old stock, that if proper care had been taken of them, would have been fresh looking and saleable. Keep your porter cleaning all the time that he is not otherwise engaged, and do so yourself when you have nothing more important to do. Keep your stock in proper containers. A small outlay for drawers, cans, salt-mouthed jars and other containers will save you many times more than the cost in the long run. Don't contract the habit of

leaving your goods in the paper wrappers that come from the wholesale house. They become dusty and torn and exposed to the influences of air, moisture and dust. Have a place for everything, and everything in its place. The therapeutic value of a preparation will be doubled by a proper care of the crude drug before use. So much about stock, and now about work.

Man must live by the sweat of his brow. Don't suppose that the drug business is an exception to the rule. There is no calling that requires more constant and persistent effort than that of pharmacy. Work! Work!! Work!!! Make your pharmaceutical preparations at odd times. Always have everything prepared, so that a customer will not have to wait to have his prescription filled until you make an ingredient to be used in compounding his prescription. Keep everything prepared that is consistent with freshness and not subject to deterioration from old age.

Keep your heavy goods, such as sulphur, salts, etc., and preparations of castor oil, turpentine, laudanum, etc., bottled and labeled, so that you have only to hand them out when wanted. It impresses a customer very favorably to be waited on rapidly.

Keep your store neat at odd moments—your counters and showcases dusted, and your goods arranged so as to make a good display. Have your show-windows properly dressed so as to attract passers-by. Follow the example of the enterprising dry goods merchant, and have your windows so beautiful that people will wish to pass by to see how beautiful the windows and store are arranged. Have it said that you have the most stylish drug store in the town. It is not always the man that has the costliest fixtures who makes the best display. All of this takes work. But it is necessary to success. The constant use of idle moments will cause you not to have many such moments to use. Insist that all your clerks and yourself be doing something all the time.

Now as to appearance and bearing in the store. Let your bearing in the store be dignified. Remember your calling is a profession, not a trade. Deport yourself then as a professional gentleman. Discourage loafers. They act as a two-fold disadvantage. They talk to the clerks, thereby consuming valuable time that might have been used to advantage; the clerks cannot, without discourtesy, refuse to listen to them; they detract from the dignity of the store. Dr. Remington says some of the customers have left loved ones at home very sick, and their sorrows can ill brook the laughter and fun of a crowd of idle boys. Besides, you lose ladies' trade by having a crowd of idle men hanging round. Any modest lady will pass by a store in which she sees a crowd of men about the front door. A lady once told me that the reason she did not trade at a certain store was because of the number of men she had to force her way through when she went in there.

Another important step is to justly enjoy the reputation for reliability and honesty, both with our kindred profession—the medical one—and the laity. Let the doctors believe that they can get good, fresh, genuine goods from you, and they will recommend your store. When they prescribe Fairchild's pepsin, give them Fairchild's pepsin. You will gain by it in the long run. Doctors can do more to make or break a drug store than anyone else. If they believe you honest, capable and reliable, they can conscientiously recommend you to their patients. Let your aim be to keep the best goods and not the cheapest. Few people want cheap drugs. When their loved ones are sick, they want the best that can be procured to alleviate their pains, and not that which is cheapest. I would rather have the reputation of keeping the highest-priced drug store in town than the cheapest. Remember that you have the right to charge not merely for the intrinsic value of the drugs, but for the knowledge and skill of preparing them.

My next suggestion is to keep up with the times. Read your drug paper, whatever journal you may take, and take plenty of them. This is a progressive age, and a man who fails to keep in line with its advanced thoughts will soon be lost in the bogs and away from the camp fires, out in the cold and frozen to death. We will find much useful information in the current periodicals, but don't limit your reading to them. A review of Remington will do you a vast amount of good. You will be astonished at the amount you have forgotten since you were at school. If you do business, do it in the latest improved manner. Keep all the improvements that will materially aid you in your profession. Don't fail to buy this or that improvement if by so doing you can make better or more beautiful preparations.

Now the last and most important comes—attention to customers. There are four things to be observed in attendance upon customers. They are shy, and we have to exercise considerable tact to lure them into our establishment. We must be polite—it costs nothing to be so. Politeness and affability are great accomplishments. Treat all courteously. Don't laugh when a countryman asks for "caster ile" and "boil beans." Respect the notions and whims of your friends, provided you sacrifice no principle in doing so. Learn to work with rapidity. Nothing pleases a customer so well as to be waited on rapidly. It impresses him with the idea that you know your business. It is moreover a great advantage to him. Keep a customer waiting an hour for a prescription, and the next time he wants one filled he will go somewhere else to get it. For this reason, as I mentioned before, keep all available substances weighed and wrapped, or bottled and labeled. If you do so, one man can wait on as many customers as two men can if they have to put up the things that are called for. Always be on time.

Learn to be neat—tie your packages