

Circularizing the Dealer

¶ "I had not made a personal investigation of the retail situation for a year or two," said an agency solicitor and service man, "and I thought I would go out and get a line on it as a help to preparing a trade circular.

¶ "And what do you think I found? Why, some of the retailers I saw were getting fifty and sixty circulars a day! The worst was in the grocery line, but the drug line was almost as bad. Read them? What a chance! Nine-tenths of them went to the floor and were swept up unopened.

¶ "I have had some experience as to the waste of dealer literature before, but the condition to-day surpasses anything I have ever seen. It has grown much worse in a single year. There is no doubt about it, the dealers are being frightfully over-circularized."

¶ If that is so, and of course it is, what becomes of the specious claim of "exclusive attention" made for the trade circular or prospectus? What sort of impression does the retailer get of national advertising when he sees, daily, this enormous waste of advertising effort, and compares the inflated claims of many advertisers with respect to consumer advertising with their failure to get a hearing from him, the very first milestone on the way.

¶ Multiply this waste of trade circulars by their cost, both in postage and printing, and then draw a direct comparison with the same message when put through the columns of the trade press, the standardized medium for reaching the dealer. Of course, the efficiency of the trade papers in different industries varies; but as a rule there is at least one first-class medium in each field.

¶ There are several good reasons, aside from cost, why the trade circular should not be thoughtlessly used, and why advertisements to the trade should be made preferentially in the trade press. One of these reasons is that the trade press represents an **organized attention** and medium of publicity, comparable to a clearing-house or public market. At a certain stage in the development of an industry or business, it comes almost automatically into existence to economize the effort and cost of doing business previously being done in an unorganized way. So far from having its publicity-power weakened by the increase in its advertising pages by the apparent increase in competition between advertisers, the very reverse is true. Because with the growth of size goes the growth of income or means of improvement, and with improvement prestige and power. From either the retailer's or the advertiser's point of view, this condition is ideal in that it fixes the time, the place, and, as far as possible, the character of the advertising appeal. It makes an appointment with a high percentage of the paper's readers, and if it has a real message to deliver, keeps it.

¶ Dollar for dollar, effort for effort, idea for idea, the opportunities for cashing in are much greater in the trade press than in the trade circular. Some advertisers talk of putting more ideas and more power into their trade circulars to lift them out of the ruck and give them a better chance at the retailer's attention. Why not put the same time and effort into the trade-paper copy?

—Editorial, Printers' Ink, November 6, 1913.