

TRADE PAPER ADVERTISING

BY CONVERSE D. MARSH

It is easy enough for anyone to record the fact that trade paper advertising has made material advances during the past ten years, and has made specially marked improvement during the past five years.

I do not believe that, notwithstanding all that has been done, a tithe of what is possible has been accomplished.

House organs flourish; special methods of advertising have increased appropriations to the detriment of the trade press, and back of all this, the large manufacturers throughout the country—capitalists who control—give scant attention to the question of trade paper advertising, and secretly have little respect for it, nor do these prime factors in the advertising appropriations believe that their interests can be materially advanced by liberal publicity in the chosen organs of their trade.

The impulse of every large publisher will be to rise up and dispute this statement, but if he does so, let our friend, the disputant, review the fact that trade paper advertising expenditures by our large manufacturers are but minute, fractional portions of the total sum expended for selling the factories' products.

In several instances of which I have knowledge, the large manufacturing corporations spend, for advertising appropriations, less than one-tenth of one per cent. of their gross sales!

Large fortunes are being made by publishers in the field of general publicity, while comparatively small ones are earned by publishers in the specialized or trade journal field.

The makers of the popular magazines can complacently cross their legs and say that this is not only as it should be, but that it is inevitable, while, on the other hand, trade paper publishers do not seem to have had the spirit to make matters better for themselves. They, too, believe that the comparatively small position that they occupy is a reasonable one.

Things are not reasonable, merely because they exist.

The complacency of the big brother may be all right, but I do not believe the acquiescence of his financially lesser kindred is.

A little seething unrest should stir the gentle soul of the trade-paper owner.

Why should the monthly, or weekly, created to amuse people, be a wonderful money maker while mainly it ad-

vertises cheap, inconsequential things, while the trade paper, the serious exponent of heavy financial interests, is relegated to an obscure corner in the congregation of publications?

The popular magazine reaches hundreds of thousands where the trade paper reaches tens of thousands, but the goods offered for sale, and really sold, through the influence exerted by many trade papers, largely exceeds the volume of trade sold through the influence of the prominent, popular magazines.

If Postum Post was at the head of some great steel company, wouldn't we see the fur fly in the advertising he did, say in the Iron Age or the Engineering Record?

If the General Electric Company was owned by the Uneeda Biscuit crowd, what a serious factor advertising in the Electrical World would become.

In the steel and iron business of this country I venture to say that the proportion spent in advertising to influence sales would be but an infinitesimal part of one per cent. of the amount of the sales.

Without the means of breaking into the archives of the gentleman who is swaying American breakfast destinies from the magical precincts of Battle Creek, I do not think I will be gainsaid in my estimate that nearly one-half of his total revenue is expended for publicity.

The sales of the General Electric Westinghouse, and the Allis-Chalmers interests alone, in the electrical world, must in combination represent over one hundred millions of dollars per annum.

I wonder, if the gentlemen controlling these electrical giants combined, are spending the insignificant sum of fifty thousand dollars per year with the trade papers?

Can it be that the seller of trifles, logically should spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, whereas, the really large business interests, having a much wider field, think they have exhausted the possibilities when they have expended a few pitiful thousands?

Does the reason for this lay accusingly at the door of either the trade paper publisher, or his customer, or should the burden of accusation be shared impartially by both. Somebody has got to shoulder it.

To my mind, neither the publisher, nor his advertiser, have yet grasped the latent opportunities that exist in trade paper publicity. It is the duty of the publisher to show these possibilities to

the manufacturer if the latter cannot spare the time to study them himself.

In some lines, one single trade publication reaches practically every buyer in the field—every man who can influence an order—and yet the advertiser with millions of dollars of possible sales, is content to merely play with the trade paper advertising proposition.

What likewise shall be said of the lack of advertising by the thousands of smaller manufacturers of machinery who could be benefited even more than the few large manufacturers by a greater amount of, and more intelligent, publicity?

Speaking broadly, I don't believe that the presidents and board of directors of our average manufacturing corporations, give five minutes' heed a year to trade papers, or what the trade papers can do for them. They are content to spend a few thousand dollars in advertising account and let it go at that. They show that they have no respect for their publicity departments, because the salaries of the managers of such departments are invariably the lowest paid heads by many thousands of dollars of any departments maintained, and the advertising counsellor is indeed a rara avis.

They think enough in other directions about making sales, but no single force in the trade paper field has yet grappled with them, struck them squarely between the eyes, and made them sit up and take notice that a great force was at their door—a wonderful force and factor that could be utilized in increasing their sales. Because in the multitude of their duties the heads of manufacturing organizations omit any consideration of advertising, will the publishers of the trade press be content to maintain the position allotted them?

Let the trade paper brother gird up his loins, and himself carry the war into Africa, if I may be allowed to so quickly shift my suggestion.

In plain, practical, every-day English, I would say that it is up to the trade paper publisher to himself devise selling plans through publicity, and bring them to the attention of his customers, big and little.

Then too, let him make his reading columns more attractive to the real people who buy the kind of goods that his advertisers have to sell. This makes an abrupt termination but it contains enough of thought to induce me to cease writing. Printer's Ink.