

Advertising.

Practical Hints on Advertising.

By CHARLES AUSTIN BATHS, New York.

I wonder if people will ever get over the idea that mere cuteness is good advertising.

I wonder if people will ever be able to distinguish between real cuteness and painful cuteness.

I wonder when they will learn that good advertising is just the commonest kind of common sense, and that the object of advertising is to convey sensible information.

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I have, perhaps, three or four letters from women every week who would like to write advertisements, and who, perhaps, have written some advertisements. I think, without exception, the advertisements they have written and sent me for criticism were written in—I don't know whether to say verse or rhyme, because metre and rhyme are seldom right.

There may be in this a thought worth considering. The fact would seem to indicate that women consider rhyming ads attractive, and it would naturally follow that they would be attracted by rhyming ads.

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The trouble with almost all rhyming ads is that they don't rhyme and they don't ad. Once in a while you stumble across one that is bad enough to be good because it is ludicrous, but ordinarily they are simply just plain bad.

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If advertisers and advertisement writers will just stop being cute and stop straining after effect and talk hard sense from start to finish, all advertising will be more profitable than it is now.

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The way an ad looks and the way it sounds amounts to very little, compared to what it actually says. What you say is of first importance. Then comes the manner of saying it; then the appearance. If an advertiser gets these points in proper sequence, he will have gone a long way on the road to good advertising.

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The best advertising is that that tells in a sensible way about the goods that are offered for sale. That is real advertising. All of the smart schemes that are used are susceptible to the same

criticism. They are not sufficiently direct. They are neither self-respecting nor dignified.

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It is easy enough to test the efficacy of any medium. The only way to really test it is to go about it quietly and advertise just as you expect to advertise all the time. It is the general run of everyday ads from which you must receive returns if your investment is to be profitable. You can't judge a paper by the results from one special ad. You can't tell anything about the value of the paper by saying, "This ad is worth twenty-five cents to anyone who will cut it out and bring it in." The way to test an advertising medium is to put in a businesslike proposition—the one you expect your customers to accept when they come to the store—and then see what the results are.

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People talk about creating a demand for advertising. I don't believe this ever happened. People may need things without knowing it. The success of new inventions proves this. Business men needed telephones a long time before they were invented. There was a demand for quick and convenient communication and the demand set the inventor's brain at work.

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Sometimes I don't know whether to think business men have too much faith in advertising or not enough. Some of them seem to think that advertising in newspapers will do the whole business. They seem to think it is what they say in their ads rather than what they do in their store that will bring them success.

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Advertising that is not backed up with good business management is worse than useless. There is no use getting people into a store unless they can be satisfactorily treated after they get there. Incompetent clerks can spoil the effect of the best advertising in the world. Advertising is a part of the salesmanship of the store. The best salesman behind the counter can do nothing unless advertising of some kind brings buyers to him. Advertising is the "accessory before the fact."

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It is not necessary to produce anything novel in advertising to insure success.

The mere fact that a thing has been done for twenty-five years does not necessarily prove it to be wrong. The object of advertising is to convey information. That is the thing that should be thought of at all times. Everything else is secondary to this. Double Pica Gothic may sometimes help things, but it isn't always necessary.

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One object of advertising is to get people into the store. I have had a hundred men, at different times, say to me: "If advertising will get people into the store we will sell the goods." Now, one particular item will draw one particular class of people, and another item will draw another class. A dozen different items, adequately presented, will draw approximately twelve times as many people to the store as one item will. That is as plain as the nose on your face.

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I believe that almost every retail advertiser would do well to study department store methods. The department stores are the people who are doing the business of the country to-day. They are bound to increase their business, and to increase in numbers. The methods they employ are successful methods. The advertising they do is generally successful advertising. Comparatively few department stores fail in business. Advertising is the thing that makes them possible—it is the thing that makes them successful. They are the most liberal advertisers in the country. Take any town you care to mention where there is a department store, and it is pretty sure to transpire that the department store is the largest local advertiser. They do not advertise one thing at a time—not a bit of it.

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There are cases, no doubt, when the one-thing-at-a-time idea is right. In small cities and towns where there is very little price cutting—where price cutting is unwise—where special sales are practically unknown—it is perhaps unwise to advertise more than one thing or one line of things at a time. The local druggist who has a six-inch space had better devote all of that space to toilet articles for one week, baby fixings for the next week, and soda water the third week. He will get more attention that way than he would by simply saying: "John Smith, Druggist. Prescriptions carefully compounded."