

How to Create Friendly Relations Between Pharmacist and Physician.

By MAURICE P. GOULD.

"There is no 'royal road to Rome.' There is no *one* way by which a pharmacist can make sure of being successful. Unforeseen obstacles arise again and again. Problems, not supposed to be in the catalogue, must be solved by *your* good judgment and business tact. No one else knows the peculiar conditions with which you have to contend so thoroughly as yourself. New ideas must be thought out, and old methods moulded anew to suit the requirements of your business.

History, whether individual, business, or national, repeats itself. Your condition now is the same to a greater or less degree as scores of other pharmacists have passed through. If there were any way by which you could find out those who have weathered successfully the storm which you are now encountering and get the benefit of all their experience, even then you would not be certain of victory, unless you had the nerve to fight as they fought.

However, there are fundamental principles necessary for success and abiding prosperity in all kinds of business. The druggist must realize this if he expects to succeed. He must be a man, taken all in all. That is the first essential.

More particularly the pharmacist should be an aggressive, untiring business man. He must be something more than a graduate, or a chemist. He is required to pass among professional men of the keenest minds, highly sensitive in matters of propriety and dignity. It must be his constant purpose to win from them respect and absolute confidence—and business. Not only must the pharmacist do this, but he must see to it that every man behind his prescription counters is deserving of and inspires a like confidence. Such being the case, it precludes, at the start, boys or apprentices from the desk, and demands, instead, men of ability, experience, and recognized standing. These cannot be secured except for liberal salaries.

The tender point between the physician and pharmacist—the point most harped upon—is "substitution." Nothing tends so much to gain the confidence and the patronage of a physician as a feeling of certainty on his part that the pharmacist, under all circumstances, is using the identical articles he prescribes. If the doctor prescribes a particular drug, it matters not whether your imitation of it is as good or better, let the doctor be assured that he gets exactly what his prescription calls for. In case it cannot be found, let the doctor be notified. It may be that your profit on the article dispensed may be small, but recognize this fact, that you must fill a prescription exactly as it is written, unless, of course, some grave error is apparent. Ordinary

business sagacity will teach this to be true.

When the physicians come to know a pharmacist through and through, and can depend on his using exactly what has been ordered, half the pharmacist's battle is won—but only half. It is possible to enjoy the utmost confidence and good will of all physicians and still not receive even a meagre share of their prescription business.

There is the plant—a fine store; high est grade drugs, dustless shelves, neat counters, clean scales, spotless mortar, tile, graduate, etc., and prescription men of experience and ability. But this is not all. It still remains to get the business. In these days of sharp competition trade is not looking for a latch-string to pull. It is necessary to go out into the "highways and hedges" and bring it in.

It is important that you impress upon the physician that you *want* his business. To accomplish this, call on him not less than every other week. Every week is better. Study each physician; his personal traits, leisure hours, and busy time. If he is busy, leave at once. If at leisure, pass a friendly greeting. As soon as an opportunity comes, speak of the new preparations, which will show you are wide-awake and progressive. (This is always interesting to a doctor.) Tell him who makes them, where they're from, what they are for. In fact, give him all information concerning them in your possession. Leave prescription blanks with him. They cost very little, and though he may have already some from another pharmacist yours may be the ones at hand when he is about to write a prescription. Study the arts of the best drummers who call on you and practise them on the doctor and all your customers. Depart before the call begins to drag, for visiting is somewhat like banqueting, if quit while there is yet a trifle of hunger the next course comes with greater relish.

Follow up the visit regularly with some form of attractive printed matter written in plain, forcible, dignified language.

Such circulars mailed weekly have been tried in several of the larger cities. A drug store in Kansas City sent out 150 a week for four months under the head of "Short Talks to Physicians" to every doctor in town. Since then drug stores in Denver, Des Moines, Memphis, Salt Lake City, and elsewhere, have issued practically the same circulars.

These circulars should be short and to the point, mentioning not only new preparations, but stating the points of superiority of your prescription department—and entire store—such as the checking of prescriptions by a second man; the mixing of ointments; the use of high grade chemicals, your exactness in compounding prescriptions, and scores of other suggestions that crowd up in the mind of a pharmacist who is full of his business.

One of the vital essentials of successful advertising is that it shall contain originality and individuality.

It is not enough to go to the physician, or to send advertising matter to him. Write and press him to come to your store at any and all times to suit his convenience. Keep every nook and corner of the store in a condition ready to undergo the closest eye of your most particular doctor customer. Treat him royally when he comes. If he seems interested, show him the store, upstairs and down, in and out, before the case and behind. Frankness breeds confidence. See that the physicians meet and know personally all of your prescription men. Accommodate the doctor by any legitimate means within your power. Whenever he buys he expects to pay, but you gain a point when you make a flat price on expensive articles. The physician appreciates the favor. The druggist cannot go amiss to decline payment occasionally from a physician for little nickel and dime stuff.

It's not one thing or another that bridges the imaginary chasm between physician and pharmacist, but it is a combination of all things working together.

Suppose a physician resides well away from your location, and, being unable to come to your place, telephones for some article. Send it to him promptly, free of delivery charges. No matter what the trouble is to you. It will revert to your advantage nineteen out of twenty times.

Whenever his folks—for most physicians have a wife and family—are in your store, give them every attention. Remember their likes and dislikes, and where it can be done gracefully and opportunely present them with some new thing, "to introduce it," as it were.

Yet along with this friendly intercourse certain points must not be lost sight of. The pharmacist is a business man conducting a business concern, soliciting and appreciating suggestions and criticisms, but, after all, running his own business. It would be poor policy to show partiality to any one physician. Let it be understood that no one doctor is expected to make "waiting" headquarters at your drug store. Even if both pharmacist and physician are wholly innocent, nevertheless other doctors, seeing this one waiting about continually, will conclude that he is getting a "bonus" some way. A suspicion of this kind grows and undermines confidence, finally driving away the most valuable trade.

No pharmacist can afford to allow a physician or anybody else, even at the risk of losing his good will and patronage, to drink a particle of spirituous liquors in his store.

Under no consideration should a druggist pay a physician a percentage. If he does, sooner or later it will reach the ears of the physicians of higher standing and result in the loss of their business. Nothing will kill a prescription business quicker or more surely than percentage paying.

It is well to make it plain to every physician that you aim to and will carry in stock any particular kind of drug he may want to prescribe, if he will inform you of