MILK and FOOD SANITATION

THE BEST SANITARIANS ARE GOOD SALESemen

James A. King
Consultant, The National Sanitation Foundation
Ann Arbor, Michigan

A parallel is drawn between the role of a salesman and that of sanitarians. The author discusses some of the principles of salesmanship and education which the sanitarian may profitably apply in his work. It is suggested that human relations can be approached in a scientific manner as well as the physical problems involved in sanitation.

Failure in human relations is equivalent to failure as a sanitarian. The key to success is a liking for people.

Once there were two salesmen.

They worked in adjoining territories and sold the same product, sanitation. One of these men took this job of selling just as it sounded. He went out and sold sanitation as a part of modern homes, as an essential in new water systems, as part of a good meal, as an extra feature of ice cream, and as a part of quality living. He liked people and believed in their ability to do things for themselves.

The second salesman was different. He decided that since certain items were on the critical list, he should delete the others from his catalogue and concentrate on the "important" items. Since only a part of the population needed the critical product, he dealt with only a part of the people. His prospective clients were usually the less-progressive portion of the population with little money, and the salesman soon found himself in quite a bad situation. He had a limited territory involving a small line, selling only to the less-progressive people, and had no budget for advertising. To make matters worse, he tried to force people to take his product, "like it or not," because it was "for their own good." Things went from bad to worse. When the product was mentioned, people thought of a policeman or of the bad situations which the salesman sought to correct. Industries that needed this salesman's product never mentioned it to the people they knew.

From time to time this man went to meetings and listened to new selling techniques or to better ways of pushing the items which he was already selling. He thought that the high-sounding ideas were fine but knew that they did not apply
to his situation. In the first place, he was too busy with his routine work; in the second place, his boss kept him busy answering complaints; and in the third place, he expected someone to hand him a set of rules that would apply in every situation.

Meanwhile, other agencies were stealing his territory, though he didn't know it. One organization published attractive bulletins and had discussion on "convenient kitchens." Another had movies and demonstrations on how to get running water. A third organization offered a prize for the most community improvement. The paint-up-fix-up campaign, with its public participation and publicity, encroached still further on the territory. The agencies were using good selling techniques and, in no case, was their program hampered by lack of imagination. Their programs varied with the needs of the people.

Selling Sanitation

But, we are interested in the first salesman, who like the sanitarian, has a good product, a necessity for all the people. He may have a few "must" items in his catalog, but in general they are all important. How does he merchandise this product, sanitation?

Let us try to forget that the term sanitation is often used in connection with the word "control" and think of the word in a little different light. We might say that sanitation is the science of a healthful environment and that it involves both material and methods. With that thought in mind, it follows that we are selling or promoting better methods—scientific methods. At the same time, we are selling or promoting equipment—scientifically designed equipment, that will promote or protect the health of the people.

"Health" is a nebulous word. At best, it is hazy and vague. We must be sure that sanitation and its relation to health is described to people in terms that mean something to them.

Imagine how difficult it would be to sell pasteurization if the customer had no interest in milk. Or, the difficulty of selling septic tanks without the conveniences of plumbing and running water. Our task is one of adding to, or modifying, the methods and facilities which people must have and want, in such a way that the former will contribute to healthful living. A deep well pump and pressure water system are convenient, but if the well is properly located and protected and the pump safely installed, water from that system is safe and a feeling of security and comfort can be also obtained.

Some health workers will not agree that a parallel exists between the task of the sanitarian and that of the salesman. They will contend that the sanitarian must be more scientific and selective in his approach to the alleviation of conditions which have been proven to cause disease. By this, they mean that the sanitarian is required to select his activities principally on the basis of need, as determined by proven health hazards, and proceed step by step to eliminate problems in an orderly manner. With the first part of this requirement there is little argument. It is believed, however, that there is need for discussion when the sanitarian or his superior undertakes to select scientific methods of carrying out his improvement program. The promotion of certain types of facilities and methods required for sanitation constitutes a change in the life of a community. Such an undertaking is a long-term educational problem. It requires the application of scientific principles which are more demanding though less understood than chemistry, bacteriology, and physics. These principles do not lend themselves to an unvarying pattern but require a constant shift to meet different personalities of individuals and groups.

Essential Factors in Selling

While the sanitarian would not wish to be compared with the type of "high pressure" salesman who uses unorthodox methods, the two professions require the application of similar scientific principles.

Perhaps the first essential in any selling campaign is selling yourself. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Live, think and act so as to arouse trust and to create confidence. If you are to win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his true friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the greatest highroad to his reason. Once gained, you will find but little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of your cause. On the contrary, assume to dictate to his judgment or to command his action—and he will retreat within himself, close all avenues to his head and heart; and though your cause be naked truth itself, transformed into a spear harder than steel, and though you throw it with more force than Hercules, you shall be no more able to pierce him than to penetrate the shell of a mud turtle with a rye straw."

One need not enumerate the characteristics of personality and character required of a sanitarian. It is assumed that these are prerequisites to employment.

A second fundamental to selling sanitation is a knowledge of the details and scope of products to be sold. The hardware salesman who sells only hammers would be inefficient even if he sold more hammers than anyone else—especially if his customers needed nails quite badly, also. He would be more ac-

What Does Sanitation Mean To Me?
accurately named a hammer salesman. By the same token, some sanitation men could well be titled inspectors or privy salesmen.

The salesman concerned with farm equipment should certainly know something about farming and should be particularly well acquainted with the situation which his product fits. Each citizen might well ask how your product fits into his home, farm, neighborhood and community. You should be able to approach him in such a way that he will want sanitation.

APPLICATION TO PUBLIC USE

What is usually in the sanitarian’s catalogue? What does he have to offer that the man, woman and child want to buy? One would expect to find material and methods affecting water supplies, sewage disposal, milk, food, schools, industry, housing, et cetera. One would further expect to find the featured points of these items pictured in detail along with sources of further information as to how one goes about securing these items. One would expect his material to point out that the product, sanitation, is essential to health and that it contributes to convenience, beauty, comfort and security. Most sanitarians, unfortunately, have quite a distance to go before their catalog will become attractive enough to be an asset. Salesmen have pictures, prices, attractive folders and movies which picture their products in a favorable light. What does the sanitarian have to show to his public besides an inspection pad?

In few cases is sanitation a complete package. It is sold as an accessory. The accessory without the main item is as worthless as a car without a motor or the light bulb without electricity. Understanding this relationship is of utmost importance. It is demonstrated in a pamphlet issued recently by the U. S. Department of Agriculture entitled Tools For Food Preparation and

Dishwashing. Integrated into this bulletin were numerous methods contributing to health but they were sold as a part of the kitchen and not as sanitation.

Dr. Haven Emerson declared, “It’s not only the product that is sold but also each wise precaution, each cooperative endeavor, each refinement of cleanliness.” Those precautions and refinements are sanitation but they have no market without the product.

An understanding of government, religion, education, politics, family relations, family history, farming, finances, industry, and entertainment is just as important to achieving health as knowing the cause and distribution of typhoid or dysentery—perhaps more important. The existence of disease is a scientific fact but the solution to the problem can be attained only by working with the variable factor, people.

While a sanitarian should know the intricate details of the sanitary sciences such as chemistry, engineering, physics, bacteriology, etc., such knowledge is of little value if it cannot be translated into public use. By the same token, simply learning about the people in his territory isn’t enough unless he also learns to interpret the facts which such a study can provide. He must know the basic motives which affect people, such as personal and social recognition, romance, and desire for a long life, money, and comfort; how to work effectively with individuals and groups; and the factors involved in changing habits and behavior. We can accomplish little as sanitarians unless we are able to use the physical sciences as our base and social sciences in our methods. We are often inclined to dismiss the latter as being common sense but we never cease to look for the key to better methods of convincing people of the justness of our cause. The key is to be found in the application of a scientific knowledge of people.

Having gathered and analyzed sound knowledge of the people he will work with and how they live, the sanitarian should begin inquiry into the status of community sanitation. Industry would call this market research. Such information as can be gathered from public records and agencies or officials certainly should be accumulated as soon as possible. Usually this is not enough information on which to start a
sales campaign or a sanitation program. It only tells what the need appears to be based upon the best information available.

Since need does not indicate interest, the sanitarian cannot assume that he is ready to start selling immediately after he determines the greatest needs. People have a peculiar characteristic of wanting to think for themselves. Why not endeavor to include people in the study of their own community, arouse interest and educate them at the same time?

COMMUNITY COOPERATION

In Clinton County, Ohio, in 1949, citizens, with the help of state health and extension service representatives, surveyed their entire county in order to find just what their problem was. They found, among other things, that brucellosis was an immediate problem in the area and that many rural and urban families do not drink pasteurized milk. The advantage of such a survey is that the people become interested in the solutions to problems by participation in their discovery and in the planning of a solution. Other groups have successfully used this survey plan in their areas.

Practically every community has organizations that are interested in improving their way of living. Whether or not they are willing to participate actively in studying their sanitation status, enlisting their interest is worthwhile. There are numerous books and pamphlets on how to work with community organizations. They include such topics as finding the community leaders, stimulating interest, organizing meetings, group discussions, etc. These are worthwhile "how-to-do it" articles which are worth reading.

In the absence of community self-study, local health departments may wish to evaluate the schools, dairies, restaurants, home sanitation, community house-keeping, or other phases of community health with their own or state health personnel.

In any case, industries such as the milk and food industries and representatives of other concerned branches of government such as education and agriculture should be consulted and invited to assist in planning the study as well as in publicizing results.

Following a survey to determine the needs in an industry or community there must be an analysis of significant facts before a report can be released. The planners should have a voice in the use which is to be made of such a report. Generally, it is used to arouse interest and as a basis for planning an improvement program. Care must be used in publicizing some types of surveys since they may involve the destruction of public confidence in an industry or agency. An example of this is the publicizing of milk survey results in a small community without first giving industry an opportunity to work out its own problems. Farmers who are supplying milk to the best of their knowledge and ability will seldom react favorably when their scores are made public property before they know what constitutes good practice. The same is true of restaurants or other groups. The best yardstick in determining good practice is to consider how one would handle such a campaign if he were hoping to improve the industry by selling them new products and methods. The complete sanitary survey, whether done by the people themselves, by a sanitarian, or jointly, following consultation with interested groups, can also serve as a basis for program planning.

Again, sanitarians should not forget that any program of sanitation involves people. These people should have the privilege of helping to plan a program if they are expected to participate. There are many skills involved in working effectively with such groups and common sense and good judgment are essential. Basically, the sanitarian must believe in people, and their ability to do things for themselves. He must help people to arrive at their own decisions even though he might save time by giving expert advice.

Each activity is a tool and each situation may require a change in sequence. A sanitarian's success or failure will not be judged by how frequently he makes inspections or speeches, but by the improvement in methods and facilities which his efforts stimulate the people to provide. The credit will go to the people in every case, but to the sanitarian goes the feeling of satisfaction that he has been a part of achieving sanitation as a way of life.

PROPER PLANNING RESULTS IN COOPERATION